FORM IN THE AMHARIC NOVEL

by

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ABSTRACT

In previous studies of Amharic prose fiction, the question of form has not received sufficient attention. The aim of this dissertation is to provide a critical introduction to narrative modes in the Amharic novel. To show the various tendencies in the methods of presention used during the brief tradition of novelistic writing, the works of ten representative writers have been selected from different periods. These are: Āfawarq's Lebb Wallad Tārik, Heruy's Hāddis Ālam, Germāchaw's Ār'āyā, Makonnen's Ālmot'hum Beyyē Ālwāshem, Nagāsh's Sēteññā Ādāri, Berhānu's Ya-Tēwodros Enbā, Hāddis' Feqer Eska Maqāber, Dāññāchaw's Ādafres, Ba'ālu's Ka-ādmās Bāshāggar, and Ābbē's Ya-raggafu Ābaboch. Each of these works is discussed separately, in the order of its publication.

In each of the ten chapters the construction of plot, the delineation of characters, the modes of exposition, the rendition of scenes, and the intrusions of the narrator are closely scrutinized so as to give an insight into the formal features of each work. In each case attempts are also made to assess not only the degree of coherence in the surface structure, but also the harmonization of the meanings and/or effects generated by the particular method of presentation.

The main finding of this study is that while the tendency to preach by using thinly-disguised demonstrative episodes, mouthpiece characters, and/or moralizing commentary still persists, the practice of subtly conveying the author's vision of life through plausibly dramatized situations has also begun to win more adherents. Many novels appearing after 1950 E.C. resort to characters that are social types rather than abstractions of ideas. Their plots operate on a higher scale of probability. Their dialogues are casual and have the semblance of naturalness. They use narrators that are less patronizing and reserved from openly conveying their value judgements. Events are presented achronologically, often in scenic form.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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T.A.

KEY TO TRANSLITERATION

I have used the following symbols for the transliteration of Amharic sounds not immediately familiar to the English reader:

consonant	symbol	vowel order	symbol
ሽ	sh	first	a
ቀ	q	second	u
ቸ	ch	third	i
ኘ	ñ	fourth	ā
ዠ	zh	fifth	ē
ጀ	j	sixth	e
ጠ	ṭ	seventh	o
ጨ	cḥ		
ጰ	p̣		
ፀ	ṣ		

(Familiar names such as "Addis Ababa", "Asmara", "Haile Sellassie", and "Amharic" are not transliterated following this system, but are rendered in their usual spellings.)

While such narrative genres as the royal chronicle, the the gadel, and the ta'ämmer had become integrated into the literature by the 15th century,[1] it was only towards the end of the nineteenth century that the genre of the novel was introduced into Ethiopia through a translation. Until the middle of the nineteenth century Ge'ez was the favoured language for ecclesiastic, literary, and official writings (although it had ceased to be a living tongue by the tenth century). When Emperor Tēwodros broke with tradition by having his letters and chronicle written in Amharic, his action marked a new turn in the literary status of this language. In 1857 E.C. his official chronicler, Dabtarā Zannab, wrote in Amharic an aphoristic book of moral precepts entitled Maṣehāfa Chawātā Segāwi Wa-manfasāwi. In 1884 E.C. Gabra Giyorgis Terfē produced the first translation of Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, a work which is claimed to have had a profound influence on some Amharic novelists.[2]

But it was at the beginning of the present century that new conditons favourable for the emergence of Amharic literature were created. In line with their efforts to build a modern empire, the leaders of the country initiated the establishment of printing presses and Western-style schools. The consequences of these measures sharply contrasted with the conditions of literary production and consumption that pertained to Ge'ez literature. As Ferenc puts it: "Writing and literature in Giiz arose mainly in the milieu of the Ethiopian clergy in monasteries and the emperor's court and those of powerful noblemen, where literature satisfied the demands of the patrons who protected and supported the authors and copyists, as well as paying for writing materials."[3] Written narratives in this literature hence remained hagiographical and historiographical. Mass production of written materials was out of the question, for the practice was then to write on parchment by hand and this was a slow and even costly work. But with the establishment of printing presses, there arose the technical possibility of producing written materials on a large scale, within a shorter period of time and at a lesser cost. Thus, before

the start of the Italo-Ethiopian War, there were seven printing presses and seven newspapers (four of them in Amharic, two in French, one in Italian).[4] This means that the ordinary public could have easy access to non-religious reading materials. With the establishment of modern schools the way was paved for the creation of a new readership and a different brand of writer. Before the War, for example, there were fourteen schools with a total enrolment of about 4200 students in Addis Ababa alone. In the other provincial towns there were about fourteen goverment schools where English and/or French were taught. This figure is apart from those schools run by the various foreign communities and missions, and also the hundred or so private schools in the capital where children were taught how to read and write. The rate at which the students passed through the bigger schools can be gathered from the report that within two years of its establishment about 3000 students passed through the Ecole Imperiale Menilek II. Most of them took up various posts with the government as interpreters, accountants, and secretaries while some became teachers. Also, by the eve of the War, about two hundred students had received some kind of higher education abroad and many of the returnees had joined the government.

In contrast to the past, education begun to be increasingly secularized and the Church ceased to monopolize its dissemination. Along with this process of expanding literacy and modernization, contacts with Western culture increased and new values and modes of expression found acceptance. Newspapers brought with them journalistic writing. Foreign tours by public figures inspired a genre of itinerary narratives. In 1908 Āfawarq Gabra Eyasus published his Lebb Walld Tārik and signalled the beginning of novelistic writing in Amharic. According to Albert Gérard, it was "one of the first [novels] to have been written in any of the vernacular languages of Africa."[5] Āfawarq's successor, Heruy Walda Sellāsē, wrote three didactic works. These two writers laid the foundation for the Amharic novel, just as Takla Hāwāryāt Takla Māryām and Yoftāhē Negusē laid the foundation for Amharic drama at about the same period. After the War many new writers followed the path of these pioneers and a variety of works in such genres as drama, poetry, and

the novel began to appear on the literary scene.

Some of the early novelists such Āfawarq and Makonnen were familiar with Western literature, but they still showed a strong link with past litery tradition, particularly in their preoccupation with religious and moral issues and in their overt patronization of the reader. Some such as Heruy and Germāchaw resorted to thinly-veiled episodes and sermonizing characters to propagate reforms in line with the spirit of modernization prevailing then. But the later generation of writers such as Berhānu, Ba'ālu, and Dāñňāchaw generally eschewed openly didactic methods of presentation. In their works one notes a marked emphasis on objectively portraying contemporary social issues and a striving to heighten artistic effects by applying innovative narrative techniques.

The works of these and other Amharic writers have attracted the attention of native and foreign commentators. Apart from the occasional book reviews, brief surveys outlining the development of Amharic literature have been written by Mangestu Lammā and Āsfāw Dāmtē. Writers such as Dāñňāchaw Warqu and Solomon Darēssā have also produced a series of articles closely analyzing prominent technical features in individual works of prose fiction . Since the opening of the graduate programme in Addis Ababa University, a few M.A. theses have been written on the works of well-known authors such as Makonnen, Mangestu, Ba'ālu, and Dāñňāchaw. These studies have generally tended to focus more on the thematic content of the works. Abroad, Feqrē Tolosā has written a doctoral dissertation entitled "Realism and Amharic Literature (1908-1981)", (University of Bremen, 1983). He discusses the prose works of fifteen authors individually.In each chapter he examines the plot construction, the characterization and the themes of the works with a view to determining the degree of their plausibility on the basis of nineteenth century (Western) notions of realism. Although Feqrē's study throws more light on the problem of effecting a verisimilitude in Amharic fiction than do the works of Gérard and Kane, it is flawed by dubious claims of the following kind: Āfawarq's novel is"nothing but a folktale" (p.58); Amharic literature attained the genre of the novel with the publication of Ār'āyā (p.86); the language of Sēteňňā Ādāri is "a rare phenomenon in Amharic realism"

(p.161); without Feqer Eska Maqāber "we wouldn't have had an aesthetical record of the reality" of feudal Ethiopia (p.207).

Among the major publications by foreign scholars, one is Gérard's Four African Literatures. The author gives an overview of the development of Amharic literature in line with his study of the rise of vernacular literatures in southern Africa. Despite his having to rely on scanty translations and secondary sources, he presents a useful summary of the major themes of a large number of works published before 1959 E.C. (excluding the novels of Berhānu and Hāddis). The work also contains valuable biographical infomation on many of the authors. But one wonders why he has to dwell so much on the English works of Sagāyē Gabra Madhen, Ābbē Gubaññā, and Āshanāfi Kabada since the subject of his inquiry is Amharic literature. That space could have been used for discussing the technical aspects of the main works.

In his study Ethiopian Literature in Amharic (Wiesbaden, 1975),[6] Thomas Kane presents a survey of a large number of novels, plays, and works of poetry. He classifies these under broad categories such as "Moralistic-didactic", "Historical Fiction", "Love and Marriage", "Education", and "Political Writing" and then briefly summarizes their stories and main themes. To those who want to have a general idea of what Ethiopians commonly write about Kane's work is a valuable source. But in view of the absence of detailed analyses of the relevant texts, one finds it difficult to accept such heavily opinionated statements as: "the concept of love is as foreign to Ethiopia as is the genre of literature in which it is written" (p.78); Heruy's Ya-lebb Hāssāb is "closely" akin to the gadel "both in form and in purpose" (p.80); Bēkā Nāmo "attempted to write the first real novel in Amharic" (p.92); Feqer Eska Maqāber is "at present the best written work in all Amharic literature and its only true novel" (p.106); maturity is "an element sorely lacking among present-day [Amharic] writers" (p.219).

Another recently published work dealing with Amharic literature is Reidulf Molvaer's Tradition and Change in Ethiopia: Social and Cultural Life as Reflected in Amharic Fictional literature, ca.1930-1974 (Leiden, 1980).[7] Molvaer presents an essentially sociological survey of plays, poems, novels, and

short stories written by twelve major authors. While the survey does provide a useful description of the customs and beliefs of particularly the Christian population, the author's claim that "fictional literature is ... studied for its own sake" is not fully borne out by the methods of his interpretation. From the way generalizations are made (especially in the first part of the book) on the basis of isolated page-references and quotations, without analytically integrating these into their larger contexts, it appears that the fictional works have been used no differently from factual data. There is a marked tendency to take the isolated statements of the characters literally and the fictional episodes at face value, without reference to their intended functions within the given plot-scheme. A reader who does not know the fictional contexts of the following references, for instance, could be misled into assuming that the implied authors share the views of the characters quoted here:

> The view of man tends to be pessimistic [page-reference to a passage in Ādafres]. "There is no beast worse than man," says a priest Abba Yohannes in Adäfres, and he adds that efforts should be made to subdue one's evil instincts: "How can this bestiality in man be overcome? It is possible through unity and strength [page-reference to a passage in Ādafres]. But usually more drastic means are called for, especially fasting; and if fasting does not help, God steps in to chastise man through natural disasters, etc..
>
> Fitawrari Mäšäša, a rich landowner, says that "when the peasant has enough to eat, he does not know his limit", i.e., he becomes arrogant and unruly [page-reference to a passage in Feqer Eska Maqāber]. The concept of satiety as a source of insubordination seems to be very firmly held. Humility and knowing one's place are much praised virtues, and pride and arrogance great moral failings. One who becomes puffed up and quarrelsome through much food must be humbled [page-reference to a passage in Feqer Eska Maqāber]. DTW translates täggäbä not only as "to be sated", etc., but also as "to be puffed up, well-fed/fat; hence to

> look down upon or despise people; to be haughty, to be arrogant or proud", and he calls a tegabäññä not only "one who is sated", but also an "oppressor of the poor".
>
> If the arrogant spirit cannot be subdued through voluntary weakening of the body through fasting, God takes a hand in the matter; and His methods include humbling man through destroying his harvest, as Wzo Asäggaš explains her views to one of her tenants....
>
> (pp.66-67)

In the above quotation, for instance, the statements of Ābbā Yohānnes and the others are not analyzed from the view point of the role of these characters in the overall thematic framework of the portrayals. If one claims to be studying a literary work for its own sake, one would have little justification for ignoring the overall functions of the texts one cites to validate an argument.

In the studies of Gérard, Kane, and Molvaer, the main focus is on the subject matter of the works. The few comments on the technical aspects of narration are generally made in passing. Commenting on this state of affairs in the study of Amharic literature, Jack Fellman says: "One would like ... to see a volume on Amharic literature as form rather than content, as medium rather than message, as art rather than social science. The time is ripe for such a work."[8] This dissertation is written in the hope of making a modest contribution in this respect. To provide a critical introduction to narrative methodes in the Amharic novel, I have selected ten important works and closely analyzed the construction of plot, the delineation of characters, the modes of exposition, the rendition of scenes, and the degree of narrator's mediacy in each of the works. To deal with each work's component parts in some detail it has been necessary to limit the number of novels treated in this study. The ten novels were written by well-known authors and selected from different periods so as to show the dominant tendencies in the methods presentation used during the brief history of the Amharic novel. But works of an outright allegorical nature have been left out as this mode

of writing merits a separate study. I have also not included works written after the February Revolution, for the novel of this period is dominated by the works of Berhānu and Ba'ālu, who are already treated here. Another reason is that I have already discussed the few important works of this period in a paper presented at the Eighth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies (Addis Ababa, 1984).[9] In this study I have used the term "novel" in its broadest sense so as to include the works of Heruy and Makonnen (which are strictly speaking novellas). The authors and works selected for this study are as follows. (Note that unless followed by " E.C. " — for Ethiopian Calendar — the dates cited here are in the Gregorian Calendar.)

1/ Āfawarq Gabra Eyasus. Lebb Wallad Tārik ("Fictional Story") (Rome, 1908).

2/ Heruy Walda Sellāsē. Hāddis Ālam: Ya-qenochennā Ya-dagg Ādrāgiwoch Manoryā ("New World: Domicile of the Modest and the Benevolent") (Addis Ababa, 1925 E.C.). For this study I have used the edition in Ityopyāwyān Filosofiwoch, edited by Zamanfas Qeddus Ābrehā, (Addis Ababa, 1948 E.C.).

3/Germāchaw Takla Hāwāryāt. Ār'āyā (Addis Ababa, 1941E.C.). I have used the 1960 E.C. edition.

4/ Makonnen Endālkāchaw. Ālmot'hum Beyyē Ālwāshem ("I Won't Lie by Saying that I Am not Dead") (Addis Ababa, 1944 E.C.). I have used the edition published in the author's collected work entitled Ārremuñ (Addis Ababa, 1960 E.C.).

5/Nagāsh Gabra Māryām (used the pseudonym "Ennānu Āggonāfer). Sēteññā Ādāri ("Prostitute") (Addis Ababa, 1956 E.C.).

6/ Berhānu Zarihun. Ya-Tēwodros Enbā ("The Tears of Tēwodros") (Addis Ababa, 1958 E.C.).

7/Hāddis Ālamāyyahu, Feqer Eska Maqāber ("Love unto the Grave") (Addis Ababa, 1958 E.C.). I have used the 1973 E.C. edition.

8/ Dāññāchaw Warqu. Ādafres (Addis Ababa, 1962 E.C.).

9/ Ba'ālu Germā. Ka-ādmās Bāshāggar ("Beyond the Horizon") (Addis Ababa, 1962 E.C.). I have used the 1967 E.C. edition.

10/ Ābbē Gubañña. Ya-raggafu Ābaboch ("Fallen Flowers") (Addis Ababa, 1964 E.C.).

Notes and References

1. Edward Ullendorff, The Ethiopians, third edition, (London,1973),pp.141-142.

2. Stephen Wright, "Amharic Literature", Something, 1,no.1 (1963) (11-23), p.15.

3. Aleksander Ferenc, "Writing and Literature in Classical Ethiopic (Giiz)", in Literatures in African Languages: Theoretical Issues and Sample Surveys, edited by B.W. Andrzejewski,S. Pilaszewicz, and W. Tyloch (Warsaw,1985) (255-300), p.256.

4.This and other information regarding the number of schools and students during this period is derived from Richard Pankhurst's article "The Foundations of Education, Printing, Newspapers,Book Production and Literacy in Ethiopia", Ethiopia Observer, 6, no. 3 (1962) (241-290),p.283.

5. Four African Literatures: Xhosa, Sotho,Zulu, Amharic (Berkeley, 1971), p.282.

6. For a more detailed discussion of this work, see Stefan Strelcyn's review in Journal of Semitic Studies, 23, no.1 (1978), pp.145-151.

7. For a further discussion of this work, see Hāylu Fullās' review in North East African Studies, 4, no.1 (1982), pp.39-44.

8/ Research in African Literatures, 13,no.1 (1982), p.149.

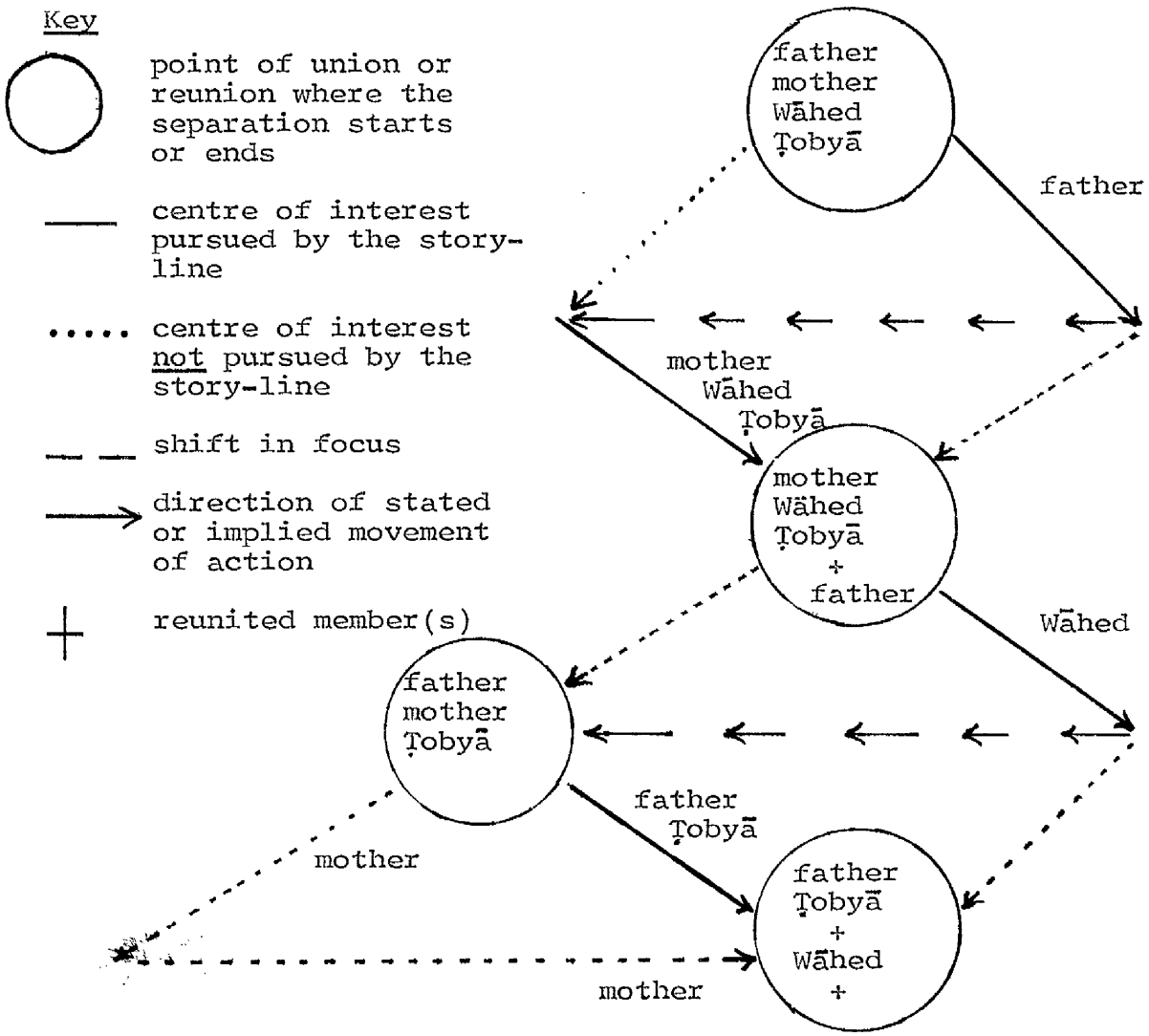
9/ "The Post-Revolution Amharic Novel (1966-1975E.C.", forthcoming.

Chapter One

LEBB WALLAD TĀRIK

I

Āfawarq's novel tells about the fortunes of a Christian family whose homeland is invaded by hostile neighbours who follow another religion. The main action develops through constant shifts in the centre of interest. The basic motifs used for framing the plot and regulating the shifts in the centre of interest are separation and reunion among the members of the Christian family. The external framework of the action can be diagrammatically represented as follows:



From the narrator's report of the way the war between the two communities begins, we can gather that all the members of the Christian family have been together before the call to arms. But when the Dajāzmāch is sent to the war front and in due course falls into the hands of his enslavers, the first separation in the family is caused. The focus of the story is then fixed on his new life as a slave until the point where his master proposes to release him. The master makes this proposal because he assumes that since his new slave was previously a man of high standing, his family would be rich enough to pay any price demanded for his liberty. As his offer is hence motivated by a desire for profit and as the Dajāzmāch is in no position to pay the ransom, the story-line reaches a dead end from this angle. So mention of the family as a potential source of help is used as a means of shifting the focus to a new centre of interest. The story then develops along this new line for some time, with the narrator presenting details of the identity of the rest of the family and their strenuous efforts to raise the ransom money. When the unknown merchant that Wāhed approaches for a job later secretly pays the ransom and secures the liberty of the Dajāzmāch, this benevolent act also paves paves the way for the second separation.

The first reaction of both the Dajāzmāch and Wāhed when they realize the source of the ransom money is a strong feeling of indebtedness to the merchant. They take themselves to be morally bound at least to express their gratitude to their benefactor. Consequently Wāhed sets out on this mission. This separation occurs immediately after the first one is over, for Wāhed starts his search for the generous merchant on the very next day of his father's return home. The focus of the story then follows Wāhed upto the point where he in turn is enslaved. Since all that Wāhed could now do is to passively wait in the hope of one day being reunited with his parents, this signals to the reader the blocking of this line of development and a shift in focus to another centre of interest.

During the whole year of Wāhed's absence from home, it seems nothing eventful has occurred there. All that the narrator reports when the focus shifts to the rest of the

family is that they have been anxiously waiting for his return home. When the Dajāzmāch eventually decides to look for his lost son, this desire for reunion generates the third separation in the family,i.e., the journey that the father and Tobyā embark on, leaving behind the mother. As before, the focus dwells on those three at home very briefly _ only for the short time taken up by the discussions and preparations for the journey. Once these are over, the focus is fixed on the two travellers. The plot develops along this story-line until the final reunion and the royal marriages.

Commenting on this reunion Feqrē Tolosā claims in his dissertation: "all becomes well for all except for the general's wife whose whereabouts is completely forgotten by the author of the tale!" (p.62). Āsfāw Dāmtē, too, finds fault with the narrator's silence about the mother, and even more about the fate of the father at the time of his children's marriage. As both commentators approach the narrator[1] with similar expectations, a response to one would clear the misreadings that led them to this stance. Āsfāw states his position as follows:

> ... Wāhed's mother has been completely forgotten. What happened to her after her husband and two children left her? We have no answer to this.... What happened to Tobyā's father? The reader knows that he was somewhere around the palace towards the end of the story. But why doesn't the author clarify his fate? Of course, the reader can assume that if Wāhed and his sister had such luck, their father, too, would be reinstated in his former post, bring over his wife, and happily live together.[2]

Āsfāw does not give his reasons for his reservation about such logical assumptions by the reader . Nevertheless, it is to this kind of conclusion that the evidence in the text leads the reader. After Tobyā and her father meet the young king, they do not "completely" forget the mother. When the father declines the king's offer to appoint Tobyā as the royal chamberlain, for instance, his reason is that she cannot

live happily in the palace, separated from her mother and brother. Again when Ṭobyā turns down the king's marriage proposal, she uses this opportunity to remind him his promise to allow them to return to their home. These statements indicate that the mother is not forgotten either by the narrator or by her husband and daughter. Besides, if Wāhed is prepared to make so much sacrifice just to express his gratitude to a kind stranger and if Ṭobyā can put up with so many difficulties for the sake of her brother, the reader has no reason to assume that these twins would abondon their mother or father when they are at the height of power and glory. There is no ambiguity about the happy turn of events at the end of the story, for even the king declares in his eulogistic poem that Ṭobyā is the pride of not only her parents but also her husband and that her sojourn is not in vain as she has "ultimately gained a crown" (p.89). Prior to the royal marriages Ṭobyā's father is appointed as one of the king's courtiers and given a lot of gold. On the eve of the weddings, Wāhed, too, is given the highest title next to the king and appointed as the ruler of the Christian land. Given such clues the conclusion that the father and the mother are ultimately reunited is logically in line with the theme of family love and hence obvious enough without the narrator spelling it out.

As Albert Gérard has rightly pointed out (p. 283), the development of the plot in this novel is facilitated by the use of coincidences. "Coincidence is the stuff fiction is made of; the necessary trick of the writer is to make the coincidence seem natural," says Walter MacDonald.[3] How does Āfawarq make the coincidence "seem natural"? To answer this it is necessary to examine how coincidental and non-coincidental events are blended. Such a blending can be most clearly observed in the nature of the link among the incidents that occur between the moments of Wāhed's embarking on his mission and his reunion with his people.

Even before Wāhed starts his search for the merchant, the success of his mission is undermined by a number of factors. One of these is his ignorance of the name and address of his benefactor. While this ignorance appears to be coincidental in respect, later, to the need to find the

merchant, yet it is convincingly justified when we are told that Wāhed was too excited by the unexpected gift of gold to even express his gratitude at that moment. Besides, Wāhed could have no reason for asking the name and address of the merchant as he does not anticipate his father's release through the generosity of this stranger. But once he realizes who is responsible for his father's liberty, he vows to find this benefactor by searching for him everywhere. However, the narrator repeatedly reminds us that Wāhed is only a teenager who has hardly been away from home before. By thus implying to us that Wāhed's knowledge of the surrounding land is inadequate, the narrator prepares us for the difficulties that the young traveller will encounter. We also know that being a caravan merchant, Wāhed's benefactor is constantly on the move. Furthermore, this man's ability to send to the enslaved Dajāzmāch a horse, money and food, apart from paying the ransom, suggests the existence of some contact between the caravan merchants and the neighbouring Muslims[4](who also trade in slaves). Now, if Wāhed's only way of finding his benefactor is by following the trail of the caravans and checking at their trading centres, his inadvertently straying into the hostile Muslims' land becomes an easily anticipateable outcome. In this context, Wāhed's encounters with the mule attendants, the peasants and their enslaved son are supplementary coincidences with a thematic significance. The mule attendants assume he is a thief and beat him mercilessly, whereas the peasant woman saves his life by nursing him tenderly. For Wāhed, these two incidents serve as the premises for a moral lesson about the contrasts in human nature. His meeting with the enslaved son of the kind peasants is a preparatory condition for another demonstration of Wāhed's virtuosity as he will later on repay his hosts' kindness by appointing his slave mate as his deputy. These minor coincidences are fillers since their omission from the story wouldn't have altered the course of development of the plot. But their inclusion has also served to reinforce the reader's anticipation of Wāhed's enslavement. The kind peasants' story about their son's enslavement and their warning against trusting strangers, for instance, are signals which foreshadow Wāhed's fate.

The implication of this warning becomes more evident when the narrator heightens the disparity between the credulous Wāhed's marvel at the eccentric hospitality of his new hosts and their ulterior motive for giving him such attention. The foreshadowing is validated when his Muslim hosts eventually sell him into slavery.

When Tobyā and her father embark on the search for Wāhed, the chances of their success are undermined from the start. They do not know the whereabouts of the person they are looking for although they know his identity. While Tobyā and her father are pursuing this apparently futile mission, the plot is further complicated by a new development, i.e., the Muslim's second invasion. Although the opportune timing of the invasion is coincidental, the event itself is not unexpected. In the preliminary exposition the narrator has prepared us for it by explaining the continuous nature of the conflict. In the opening of the story he says, " every time, every year, ...[the Christians and the infidels] fought against each other, slaughtered each other, annihilated each other"(p.1). We can also infer from the same exposition that, apart from their long-standing religious hostility, it was the benefits from war booty and the sale of captives that spurred them on to such aggression. As the transitional phrase "in the same manner" (p.2) suggests, the first invasion, too, is motivated by these same factors. Feqrē wonders why

> the pagan king must invade the country for the second time — he has already subdued the country, and had he wanted to convert the Christians to his religion ..., instead of returning to this territory, he could have done so the moment he subdued the whole country. But when one probes into the matter, one realises that the second unjustified invasion is... [intended by the author] to complicate and develop the plot.
>
> (p.61)

But whether or not to complicate the plot is the prerogative of the writer. The reader's objection should be directed

not to this license but to arbitrary developments that contradict what he has been led to expect, without yet fulfilling an ultimate purpose. And there is no such inexplicable inconsistency with regard to the occurrence of the second invasion. To begin with, the narrator has already informed us about the frequency of past clashes, and by that standard a time lapse of a year and a half is a long enough period for a second clash to occur. There has already been a precedence in the past when both sides have been alternately truimphant over the other and yet not occupied its territory. So there is nothing unusual about the fact that the first invasion does not result in an occupation of the Christian land. Besides, the narrator himself makes clear the limited objective of the first invasion when he says, "after their victory the infidels entered the country as they had boasted, laid it waste, took the cattle and their captives, and returned to their country" (p.2). There is no mention of any plan to convert the Christians to their religion nor any suggestion of the Muslim king's direct participation in the invasion.

The motivation for the second invasion, however, is not purely economic. Nor does the aggression come in the form of a booty-grabbing raid. As the wealthy peasant explains to his guests, the death of the Christian king has left the country not only leaderless but also defenceless. There is now no acknowledged leader who could mobilize the people into an organized fighting force. Says the wealthy host, "when he heard this news the king of the infidels mobilized his men, loaded his mesebāhā [prayer beads] on his camels, and started marching towards our country to occupy our land, to convert the Christians to his religion, and to destroy those who refuse conversion" (p.36). It is these factors which become the pretext for the second invasion and naturalize its coinciding with the search for Wāhed.

This convergence of the two events, however, does not by itself bring about the fateful encounter between Ṭobyā and the Muslim king (on which the success of their search ultimately depends). There are still other incidents and conditions, both accidentally and causally motivated ones,

which pave the way for this encounter by narrowing down the chances of their bypassing each other.

The first step in this direction is taken by isolating Tobyā and her father from the other Christians so that they would not fall into the hands of the ordinary Muslim fighters like their host villagers. This occurs when Tobyā and her father ride in a different direction instead of joining the people hosting them and fleeing with them to the relative safety of the nearby gullies and bushes. Although no explanation is explicitly offered regarding why the two do not join the villagers, the availability of the horse seems to have induced them to flee alone. They seem to have assumed that they could escape by covering much distance ahead of the approaching invaders. Their constantly looking back to check how far they have out-distanced the soldiers is an idication of their intention to escape in this way. But they soon realize not only the futility of such a ride but also the scarcity of a hiding place in the exposed flat terrain. When the lone and desolate hill thus turns out to be the only sanctuary available, it is obvious that an element of chance is applied to save them from the Muslim fighters close behind them. Tobyā thus argues: " ...not all the soldiers are likely to march on foot, and if they use animals, they will naturally ride in the plain where they can get villages to plunder. The invaders will not climb a hill where there are no people, no livestock, no crops, no silver or gold to plunder, but only the waste matter of vultures" (p.41). Accordingly the two abandon their horse, climb up to the top of the hill, and from that vantage point watch the Muslims ravage the villages in the surrounding neighbourhood. Nearly the whole day, the huge Muslim army passes by on both sides of the hill, with no one breaking rank to climb it. Late in the afternoon, however, the size of the marching soldiers thins out, leading Tobyā and her father to assume that all the soldiers would soon finish passing by, thus enabling them to return to their home on the next day.

But fickle chance now works to bring them face to face with the young Muslim king. The sun begins to set at about the time that the king and his escorts, who form the rear

of the army, approach the lone hill. This forces them to make camp at the foot of the very same hill, thereby making the presence of this landmark a catalyst in the development of the plot. Since it has been a long-standing custom for the monarchs to survey the surrounding land before settling down in their temporary camps, what better site is there for this purpose than the top of the hill! So, unaware of what awaits him there, the young king climbs the hill and, naturally, spots the two people who have taken refuge there. Had it not been for the magnanimity of the king, his trophy-hungry courtiers would have hacked them to death, however. His intervention is justified by a plausible motivation, as it is on the ground that it is no proof of valour to kill an unarmed and passive enemy. He argues that those who are in no position to counter-attack should only be taken captive. He then declares that Tobyā and her father are his captives and thus keeps them in his company. When he feels in full control of the Christian country, he makes a decree calling for the establishment of peace and order. He also threatens to punish severely any rivals from the Christian aristocracy that may try to undermine his rule: "If, after this decree, you refuse to settle down to normal life and instead seek to challenge my rule by leading the people into rebellion, you shall forever forfeit your land and privileges and pay dearly for your misdeeds" (58-59).

Following the decree, the march stops and the king settles down at one place. This in turn gives him enough opportunity to know more about his two captives. He assumes that Tobyā is a male (because she is disguised as one) and, like everyone else in the royal court, begins to appreciate her virtuosity. Within a short period of time, he decides to appoint her as his chamberlain. Initially, however, the father declines the position on her behalf, on the ground that they have to continue with their search for her brother. Upon hearing about Wāhed's disappearance, the king makes a nation-wide declaration offering to pay ten-fold to any one who brings him the slave he is looking for. Some months later this news reaches Wāhed's master, who, attracted by the reward soon brings Wāhed to the king.

Although the plot is built on an intermingling of causality and chance, considered on a higher thematic plane, the distinction between the two becomes nominal. When one takes into account the Christian characters' fatalistic interpretation of their mixed fortunes one can sense in it a vision of life in which everything is predetermined by God. He is the ultimate motive force behind every event, irrespective of whether it appears to be causally motivated or merely the work of chance. For them, every occurrence is equally and without distinction a manifestation of His mysterious will.

We know, for instance, that the Dajāzmāch is able to be reunited with his family only because the merchant paid the ransom for him. While the family, too, recognize the merchant's generous role, they, nevertheless, regard him as the instrument for the fulfillment of God's will. Such a view is implicit in Ṭobyā's speech when she consoles her father during the second invasion:

> Dear father! In the past, God gave us joy by miraculously delivering you from slavery. God does not start what He will not complete. Now, too, He will cause His miracles to protect us against any harm.... So do not lose hope. Let us trust our worries to Him.
>
> (p.39)

Earlier the wealthy peasant explains to Ṭobyā and her father the economic, political, and religious motivations of the second invasion. But Ṭobyā still thinks that the invasion is the design of God and , in spite of the imminent threat to their lives, she has no doubt that God will intervene on their behalf. After all, no power of humans or the elements is too great for God to overcome. When the king spots Ṭobyā and her father in their hiding place and asks them why they are there, the father replies, "we thought that God would save us from the ravages of this army and hid here" (p.47). When this trust in God is mocked at by the king's jester, the father counters it by enumerating contrasting and, on the whole, extreme traits

of the elements which are beyond the control of man:

> Neither the proximity of the mountain nor the distance of the plain, neither the height of the sky nor the depth of the ocean, neither the mildness of the wind nor the blaze of the sun, neither the ferocity of the volcano nor the coldness of the snow, neither the darkness of the night nor the brilliance of the daylight can prevent this God, Whom you are deriding, from sending his mercy or wrath.
>
> (p.48)

Underlying such testimonials is a deeply ingrained religious ideology which also shapes the ideals within that society's value-schemes. The merchant, for instance, pays all that amount of gold for the release of the Dajāzmāch not just out of pity but because he believes that God would reward his deed in the Hereafter. Tobyā, too, initially rejects the privileges of being a great queen and even risks her well-being because she considers marrying a non-Christian as being tantamount to abandoning God and the eternal joys of the Otherworld. To Tobyā and her father (as well as to the narrator who identifies with them) chance and necessity have a single and inalienable ultimate cause — God's will. Since the informing principle behind such a structural organization of the story appears to be this religious ideology, the verisimilitude of the frequent coincidences and other extraordinary events cannot be appreciated in isolation from this context.

II

In the introduction to his dissertation, Feqrē forwards the rather circular argument that "the realistic representation of social life is universal and could be practised by any realistic writer in any part of the real world" (p.19). With this as his premise, he argues that Āfawarq's novel is not a realistic work because, "contrary to a realistic piece of work, there are too few truthfull

details in it" (p.62). To him such an event as the conversion of the Muslim king and his followers to Christianity is unconvincing because it cannot happen in reality (p.64).

The distinguished critic Tzvetan Todorov rejects as "most naive" that notion of verisimilitude which expects a portrayal to be "consistent with reality" or when "certain actions, certain attitudes are said to lack verisimilitude when they seem unable to occur in reality."[5] In place of such a notion, he presents three major versions of verisimilitude, of which I shall cite the two that are relevant to the present context. In one version, verisimilitude is taken as "a relation not with reality (as is truth) but with what most people believe to be reality — in other words, with public opinion. Hence discourse must be consistent with another (anonymous, impersonal) discourse, not with its referent" (p.82). In the second version, verisimilitude is determined by the work's relation to the laws of its genre — "there are as many verisimilitudes as there are genres" (p.83).

Afawarq's novel was written for an audience whose outlook, unlike that of its more sceptical counterpart in twentieth century Europe, was not conditioned by the cause and effect premises of a scientific culture. The following description by an anthropologist can show the kind of outlook the society addressed by the novel must have had:

> Prayers to God are spoken on numerous occasions. God's blessing is sought when an animal is slaughtered, when a group of people sits to eat, when a new house is begun, and when it is completed. Each day begins with a prayer like this: "May He cause me to spend the day in peace. May He keep trouble from me. May He pardon my sins." When the peasant begins planting, he also prays: "God bless the seed; feed me, keeping birds away from it; bless it for the mouth of man".
>
> It is probably the attribute of God's omnipotence, however, that appears most vivid to the Amhara mind. Everything that happens reflects His active will. The thunder expresses His anger, a

> flood the visitation of His Wrath upon the sinful. He is ever active, bringing births and deaths, prosperity and hunger, leading one traveler to safety and another to disaster. He controls the homliest of details of everyday life. One boy, troubled that he was not selling his goods in the market, confessed that God must be angry with him about something. Another, asked what he wanted to do the following year, replied: "If God wants me to, I may go to school; but it is difficult to know what God will want."[6]

Apart from its conformity with such "public opinion" as well as the verisimilitude of the gadel to a limited extent, the novel has its own textual mechanism for monitoring the reader's responses. This is the series of overt and covert signals that the authorial narrator relays to the narratee. Like the narrator himself the narratee is a textual construct, an impersonalized being that does not as such belong to the fictional world. It is in a way the reader's representative in the text and from that position plays a significant role in the influence of the reader's responses to the story. In the words of Gérard Prince:

> The most obvious role of the narratee, a role that he always plays in a certain sense, is that of relay between the narrator and the reader(s), or rather between author and the reader(s). Should certain values have to be defended or certain ambiguities clarified, this can easily be done by means of asides addressed to the narratee. Should the importance of a series of events be emphasised, should one reassure or make uneasy, justify certain actions or underscore their arbitrariness, this can be done by addressing signals to the narratee.[7]

In the case of Āfawarq's novel, we can gather from the narrator's various comments how the narratee's anticipation's are monitored and how he is signalled to suspend his disbelief. At the beginning of the story, for instance, the

narrator offers a brief and generalized exposition about past wars in which the truimphant Muslims ravaged the land of their Christian neighbours and enslaved the captives. By thus providing the precedence for the outcome of the second invasion, the exposition "naturalizes" the defeat of the Christians, the plunder of their homeland, and the enslavement of the Dajāzmāch. Since he has already been alerted to the possiblity of such an outcome, the narratee would not regard the victory of the Muslims as unusual.

The two maxims with which the story begins also serve as naturalizing devices. The first maxim goes: "He who does good lends; he who does evil is himself hurt." The second one goes: "When a generous person gives, he is in fact lending and not giving as such" (p.1). According to Jonathan Culler, when a maxim is explicitly cited,

> the text itself performs the operations of naturalization but simultaneously insists that the laws or explanations which it offers are the laws of the world. A sentence which is initially in vraisemblable, such as "the Marquise called for her carriage and then went to bed" (invraisemblable because it deviates from an accepted logic of human actions) can be naturalized by additions which would bring it within the pale of accepted cultural models: "for she was extremely capricious" (where labelling makes deviation intelligible) or "for, like all women who have never encountered opposition to their desires, she was extremely capricious" (which produces the relevant maxim...).[8]

Likewise, since Āfawarq's story does not as such operate on an ironic plane, the two maxims serve as a cultural frame of referene which explicates some of the actions and fortunes of the characters. When the slave owner announces his condition for releasing the Dajāzmāch, the narrator intrudes to explain why the latter's family could not afford to pay the ransom. We are told that as the Dajāzmāch was in the habit of helping the needy and rewarding the valorous, his generosity did not allow him to save

much money in his heyday. This comment also signals to the narratee to anticipate the Dajāzmāch's release by some means, in reciprocation of his own benevolent deeds in the past. When he is eventually released and reunited with his family, the maxim's validity is confirmed, thereby leading the narratee to expect a better fortune for the now impoverished merchant, the enslaved Wāhed, and the bereaved parents who nurse his wounds. The anticipatory significance of the maxims again becomes apparent when the narrator alludes to them when explicating the transformation of the poor merchant's fortunes through the agency of Wāhed: "Man's deed, whether evil or good will be retributed accordingly not only in the other world but also sometimes in this world"(p.79).

Other frames of reference are also used to naturalize actions which seem to conflict with the norms that are implied by the antecedents. During the Muslim king's first encounter with Tobyā and her father, for instance, the king unexpectedly defends the equality of all religions. To counter in advance the narratee's scepticism towards this act, the narrator comments on the speech: "The king then interrupted their laughter and, as if he were inspired by the Holy Spirit, spoke thus.... All those who were escorting him were surprised by this unexpected speech" (p.49). The narrator's reference to the "Holy Spirit", the astonishment of the escorts, and the unexpected nature of the king's speech are signs of admission by the narrator that the act is unusual. But this recognition by the narrator is also a means of asserting to the narratee: "believe it or not, this is the truth! this is what actually happened!"

Dāñ̃ñ̃āchaw Warqu maintains that the narrator's commentaries were not appropriately employed. Discussing such intrusions in this novel and another one he says:

> Direct comments by the author which once in a while crop up in some of the pages, as some of the following examples show, could again have helped to control and weave together the myriad strands of the lives of the people involved. But

> as they are, they haven't contributed much. On every page, they are simply lines of sentimental rubbish, and the effect of them is irritating.[9]

One of the examples which he cites is the commentary on the family's effort to raise the ransom money:

> It is true that trying to raise an elf waqēt[10] of gold by hiring one's self out as a servant and by weaving cotton on contract is unbelievable. But what else could they do? They had no other alternative apart from these.
>
> (p.5; translation mine)

But, since Dāňňāchaw's criticism is levelled at all the commentaries, it seems to suffer from overgeneralization. As we have already seen, the maxims, which amount to commentaries, serve to naturalize the merchant's generosity and his reward later, Wāhed's suffering and his good fortune later, and the appointment of the enslaved son of the kindly peasants. Likewise, the retribution of the noble deeds of the Dajāzmāch and Tobyā could also be explicated in terms of these maxims. In light of this, quoting the maxims has contributed to the unity of the motivations of these characters, thereby weaving together the various strands of their lives.

The commentary on the family's attempt to raise the ransom money, too, has a function. Why does the narrator concede the futility of this attempt in advance? It is because he anticipates the narratee's scepticism. What is important here is not the achievement of the effort, but rather what is signified by the effort. The narrator wants to impress upon his audience not only the utter impoverishment of the family but also the depth of their love for their enslaved man. So he poses a rhetorical question loaded with these implications and then gives a definitive answer affirming the genuineness of the family's situation.

Nevertheless, there are still some inconsistencies which have not been explicated by the narrator by using such overt signals. When Wāhed's father is sold into

slavery, for instance, the narrator does not mention any problem of communication between him and his master. But when Wāhed in turn falls into the hands of his enslavers, the narrator deals in detail with the misunderstanding arising from the language barrier between the Muslims and their young victim. Yet, again, during the first encounter between the king and Tobyā's father, no such problem is mentioned. In fact the narrator later tells us even about the exchange of letters between Tobyā and the Muslim king. These inconsistencies could have been rendered intelligible by providing hints about the use of interpreters or the possibility of the characters speaking more than one language. But no such clues are given.

From the foregoing discussion, the reader can gather that the relation of this novel's fictional world to the external world is not mimetic or representational. Its concern is not an accurate recreation of a particular society in a definite historical period. It does not even have a specific time and place setting to do this. It is true that one could identify elements of the Amhara culture in the food items, costumes, and honorary and official titles of some of the characters. From the narrator's few references to Lālibalā, Amhara, and Ethiopia, however, it is impossible to pinpoint the exact geographic setting of the story. Furthermore, contrary to what many commentators (Gérard, Kane, etc.) have claimed, the time setting of the story is not the beginning of Christianity. It seems that the narrator's initial reference to the time when "the Torah was rejected as the Gospel began to be preached" (p.1) is made in an attempt to trace the history of the persecution of the Christians. Even the Muslim king testifies that the constant conflicts between his subjects and the Christians (both neighbouring peoples probably living in Ethiopia) continued for many generations. Other references to the "long English field glass", "writing paper", and "cannon" suggest a more recent time setting, perhaps no earlier than the Portuguese military expedition to Ethiopia in the sixteenth century.

Whatever particular time and place setting Āfawarq might have had in mind when he wrote his novel, it is obvious that the recreation of a definite historical society was secondary to his aim. The bigger-than-life images of the central characters and the special significance attached to the Christian values suggest that the portrayal is of an illustrative nature. Scholes and Kellogg explain the difference between illustrative and representational portrayals as follows:

> Illustration differs from representation in narrative art in that it does not seek to reproduce actuality but to present selected aspects of the actual, essences referable for their meaning not to historical, psychological or sociological truth but to ethical and metaphysical truth. Illustrative characters are concepts in anthropoid shape or fragments of the human psyche masquerading as whole human beings. Thus we are not called upon to understand their motivation as if they were whole human beings but to understand the principles they illustrate through their actions in a narrative framework.[11]

In the case of Āfawarq's novel, the object of the portrayal is an abstracted Ethiopia whose very survival is threatened by religious conflicts and which ultimately attains salvation and glory through the consolidation of Christian hegemony. The illustration and glorification of Christian ideals being a primary end, descriptive details are subordinated to the realization of this end.

III

Commenting on the quality of the description in this novel Feqrē says:

> The physical and psychological conditions of the characters are not portrayed in detail. True Tobbya

> is portrayed exaggeratedly beautiful [sic], and Wahid's fear in the forest at night is reflected superbly. The king's jester, whom the author obviously hates, is fantastically portrayed as an ugly creature. But we have no idea of the real pictures of the general, his wife, the merchant and all those figures which Wahid and the general encounter. The look of the houses in the story, the objects in them, the manners, customs and norms of the people and the physical appearance of the invading army have not been painted as much as they would have been in a realistic work of literature.
>
> (pp.62-63)

Feqrē seems to assume that the more detailed a description is the more "realistic" the portrayal becomes. Accordingly, if the narrator had described the Dajāzmāch, his wife, the generous merchant and the likes in as much detail as he does Wāhed's fear or the jester's ugliness (which Feqrē here cites as "good examples" of the "realistic elements" in the novel, pp.65-67), then the depiction of the characters would have been "realistic". But, even taking Feqrē's criterion of "truthful details" as the yardstick for determining the "realism" of a given depiction, it is too obvious that there is little realism in the hyperbolic description of Wāhed's fear or the jester's ugliness. Nor would the quantity of descriptive details by itself determine the realism of a given depiction. Referential or ornamental description that neither explicates the developments in the plot nor contributes to the advancement of a theme has little place in this portrayal. The first invasion in which the Dajāzmāch is taken captive, for instance, is presented in a generalized summary. Since the primary function of this preliminary exposition is to lay bare the background to the onset of the central action, the narrator does not dwell on it in much detail , for the sake of vivifying the events of the war.

The second invasion, by contrast, is treated in greater

detail, as it entails the climax points of the story. The first physical sign of this invasion is the big cloud of smoke that heralds to Tobyā and her father the approach of the invading enemy. From the narrator's report, we gather that the Muslims are armed with spears and swords, that they try to destroy the Christian homeland by selectively massacring the able-bodied men, by taking the women as captives, by burning down their crops, homes, churches, and plants, by looting their property and driving away their cattle. From what Tobyā and her father witness, we come to know about how the overwhelmed Christians flee in disarray in their attempt to save their lives. More details that are lacking in the report of the first invasion now begin to emerge through vivid scenes like the approach of the royal retinue and the setting up of the tent-camps. These detailed descriptions amplify the grand scale of the destruction wrought on the Christians and the precarious state of their very survival as an idependent community. They also show the overwhelming might of the invading Muslims and the seemingly irreversible nature of their dominance over the Christians. By drawing such contrasting images of the two belligerent forces, the descriptions have the cumulative effect of heightening to epic proportions Tobyā's crucial role in reversing the power balance of the two communities. In contrast to the Christians' seemingly immutable impotence, note, for instance, how an image of unearthly invincibility is built in this description of the invading army's camp:

> When this tent [of the king] was seen, that vast plain lying flat like a sea was instantly covered with a multitude of tents. As it became packed with people, horses, mules and the stolen cattle, it seemed as if there wouldn't be enough space on the ground even for a lemon tossed into the air to fall on. The scene looked like a great gathering of all creatures summoned by a trumpet from the four corners of the world on the day of the Last Judgement. No one would have thought that this was the army of a single nation, under the command

> of one king. Their number was such that, let alone be defeated by human power, they seemed as if even a calamity delivered by Christ himself could not wipe them out, and if it did succeed, as if there wouldn't be enough space to bury them all.
>
> (p.45)

Since the contrast in the position of the two sides is deliberately sustained by subsequent descriptions of such a hyperbolic nature, the two protagonists' repeated invocation of devine intervention on the Christians' behalf, especially Tobyā's prayer, seems to suggest that a reversal of the new situation is impossible short of a miracle. And God seems to respond favourably to this appeal when He paves the way for the salvation of the Christians through the agency of Tobyā. The first sign of this comes when Tobyā's influence on the Muslim king is demonstrated on the occasion of the royal review of the warriors' parade. Thus after describing the majestic ceremony in which the brave warriors display their trophies and the blood-smeared garments of their Christian victims, the narrator says:

> Very pleased with the bravado of his warriors, the king welcomed their display with beaming smiles. But when Tobyā saw all this jubilation she was deeply aggrieved by the loss of life, the destruction of her country, the defeat of the Christians, and the rise of the infidels. She turned her face towards the side of her father and wept. The king noticed her from a distance and understood her sorrow. Realizing that one's suffering was another's joy he immediately interrupted the display of trophies without any explanation and went to his tent.
>
> (p.55)

That evening, while taking a walk in his camp, he passes by the tent of his two captives and again observes Tobyā

lamenting over the fate of her fellow Christians. He spends the next day pondering over what course of action to take. He remembers the causes of Tobyā's grief and makes a decree to stop the further destruction of the Christians and their country. "After this decree the country was no more plundered and the people no longer killed" (p.59), says the narrator. Following this decree, there are also no further descriptions that contrast the positions of the Muslims and the Christians, either. The focus turns to Tobyā's increasing influence on the king.

It is Tobyā who is responsible for the conversion of the king and his followers to Christianity. It is she who is instrumental in the liberation of her fellow Christians and the redressing of the balance in political power, for, after his conversion, the king declares that the Christians shall rule and never be subjugated. "As a result of this decree, all the Christians sold into slavery were freed" (p.86). Tobyā herself is well-aware of her vital role in effecting these changes. After a prolonged psychological crisis, when the king finally agrees to be converted to Christianity, the narrator says: "... instead of the prospect of becoming a queen, it was her being the cause for the conversion of that great king of the infidels which pleased Tobyā. For this she thanked God..."(p.83).In her ability to win over the king and improve the conditions of her fellow Christians, Tobyā attains the status of a Christian crusader. This can be inferred from the military orientation of the language of the panegyrics which she and the king improvise on the occasion of their wedding. Thus he says:

> She has joined the government of two nations
> Undaunted as she is by fears of combat
> There she is in the thick of the battle
> And before any hero, she has taken the
> king captive
>
> (p.89)

Tobyā replies to this by first building a grand image of the might of the king (in a manner parallel to that of the

narrator's descriptions) and then concluding with an anti-climax that reduces this power to impotence in the face of Christianity:

> He who made thousands upon thousands of
> Amharas flee
> He who smashed the Rāses and Dajāzmāches
> He who dethroned the one with the great crown
> He who was never scared of even the cannon,
> Let alone the spear and sword,
> He whose news brought shivers even at a distance
> He whose voice brought panic across the precipice
> He who broke the ox of the monastery
> He whom the most solid chain could not restrain
> The lion is tamed and shackled with a
> mātab [neck-cord]
>
> ---
>
> All those infantry men
> All those heroes
> All those warriors
> All those parading combatants
> He disarmed through a priest
>
> (p.90)

While the king emphasizes Ṭobyā's charm and prowess, Ṭobyā underscores the king's great might in the face of the power of the Christian faith. The poems sum up Ṭobyā's epic role as well as glorify the ideals she symbolizes.

As has been stated earlier, purely ornamental descriptions of landscapes, interiors, and casual scenes are rare in this novel. The description of the big compound of Wāhed's would-be master, for instance, is plot-oriented. Its immediate function is to show why the Christian slaves could not escape from their captivity. This is how it is described:

> The estate was encircled by a wide moat like a fortress. Within it there was a stone fence on all sides. The top of the fence was covered with acacia thorns so that no one would jump over it.

> In the middle of this there were two big saqalā houses and two bēta negus halls. The compound had only two gates, one of which was very narrow and the other wide enough to let one enter mounted on a horse. At this main gate was standing a man as dark as the devil. His chest looked wide enough to be measured in cubits. His height loomed like a pillar. His eyes looked as if they were rubbed with ensosellā [i.e., were blood-shot]. His nose looked as if an avalanche of rocks had rolled over it. His arms, which looked like the feet of an elephant, were adorned with tin and copper armlets. With his four-edged sword dangling down his pumpkin-like naked belly and his club firmly held in his right hand, he planted himself at the this main gate to keep away anyone who had no permission to enter.
>
> (p.28)

The above scene is presented from Wāhed's perceptual point of view,[12] as he sees it from outside. At first he thinks that the compound belongs to the chief of the hamlet. But the moment he enters the compound he realizes that "all that estate, all that fortress, all that reinforcement with thorns was the property of a big slave trader, and that it was all designed to prevent the captured slaves from jumping over the fence and escaping during the day or night" (p.29).

In the description of the physical appearance of the characters, the features which the narrator cites are often those that are peculiar. In the description of the guard above, for instance, there is no mention of his hair, teeth, or the likes. Rather, it is the darkness of his skin, the wideness of his chest, the blood-shot colour of his eyes, the flatness of his nose, the largeness of his arms, the bulkiness of his belly and his towering height which catch the attention of the perceiver. The guard is painted as ghastly-looking so as to reinforce the impression of an awesome environment with little chance to escape from. In the case of the jester and the

dwarf it is those features that heighten their ugliness that are cited. In each case, hyperbole is the standard form of description and the amplified images are effected by a series of similes.

The description of Tobyā's looks, while still on a hyperbolic scale, differs from the above three in the quantity and quality of the details. Her eyes, eyelashes, nose, lips, hair, teeth, neck, fingers, waist, and legs are described in a descending order from top to bottom and in the most favourable terms, using such clichés as the morning star, the blooming rose, the glistening snow, and the queen bee for comparison. Her superb beauty is likened with that of the angels: "It was in vain that Tobyā wore flesh, for her charm and beauty made her look like a close kin of the cherubim" (p.60). The narrator uses this goddess-like image to justify her speedy popularity in the royal court and her increasing influence over the king. The technique the narrator uses here is first to build a larger-than-life image of the king's military might and then to counter it with an even more larger-than-life image of Tobyā's charm and beauty. Thus, after vividly describing her looks, the narrator concludes: "...as in the saying that even angels love the beautiful, so,when this young king saw all this gift of God, his spirit loved her very much and he wanted to raise her as his chamberlain. His love made him forget their differences in religion. Yet, he never suspected her femininity" (pp.60-61).

Although the complete resemblance between Tobyā and her twin brother has been repeatedly pointed out (as when they are first introduced to the reader and later when the father tells the king the parents' difficulty in distinguishing between the twins), it is she who is singled out for such a detailed description. The purpose of the emphasis on this physical resemblance is to facilitate the marriage match, since the king's cousin confuses Wāhed with Tobyā and marries him.

The king himself is described in sparse details, though in terms that put him in clear contrast with the ugly jester and the dwarf. The features selected seem

designed to generate an image of a benign ruler: his speech is "polished and sweet", his countenance is "graceful", his complexion is "vintage wine", his bearing is "majestic and awe-inspiring"(pp.52-53).

Since the narrator is least motivated by ornamental ends or the need to satisfy his audience's curiosity about the physical features of all the main characters, he does not describe the looks of the Dajāzmāch, the generous merchant, Wāhed's master, and the king's cousin. It seems that functionality also determines the description of landscapes and compounds. Thus while the compound of Wāhed's master is described, his own home is not.

IV

The fictional world of Āfawarq's novel is populated mainly by two categories of characters: the virtuous (who are essentially the Christians) and the wicked (who are essentially the non-Christians). In each case, however, there are exceptions. Contrasting the kindness of the peasants who saved his life with the cruelty of the mule attendants who mercilessly beat him, Wāhed speculates "how many good people and how many evil people there are in this world". On the side of the Muslims, too, the king's magnanimity and religious tolerance is presented as an exception for it surprises even his close followers. In spite of these exceptions, the moral division between the followers of the two religions is clearly marked. The generosity of the Christian merchant, for instance, stands in sharp contrast with the greed of the two slave owners. The genuine hospitality of the peasant families is also similarly contrasted with the hypocrisy of Wāhed's hosts who sell him into slavery.

One distinct feature of the characterization of the protagonists is that their thoughts and acts are geared to illuminating their virtues in particular. Before his enslavement the Dajāzmāch used his wealth for helping the needy and for rewarding the brave. on the day he is reunited with his family, before he even gets enough rest, he asks his son to "immediately" take him to the address

of the generous merchant. Wāhed, too, doesn't lose time in setting on his mission of finding his man, for he starts his journey the very next day that his father returns home. Although Wāhed doesn't know the name and address of this man and is too young for the arduous task he vows not to give up his search until the end of his life. During the search, he suffers from hunger and thirst, cold and heat. He encouters physical torture and enslavement. But even when he is finally rescued by the king, neither his past suffering nor the prospect of a comfortable life with the king slackens his resolve to find his benefactor and express his gratitude. His personality is thus built on one trait: an unshakeable determination to return good with good, for that is what he does for the merchant and the peasants that nursed him. In the eyes of the narrator, Wāhed's pursuit of such noble causes earns him the status of the Righteous, as is implicit in the analogy that Wāhed's "suffering and pain was no less than that of the martyrs which one hears about when their gadel is read" (p.22). And yet, eventhough Wāhed is a dedicated Christian, the strength of his piety does not seem to match that of his sister. When the king offers him his cousin in marriage, he does not reject it as such. His preference to wait and see what decision his sister will make seems to suggest the possibility of his agreeing to marry a non-Christian if Tobyā were to accept the king's marriage proposal.

Tobyā's piety is the main trait, if not the only one, which distinguishes her from her brother. Even when she and her father are under the shadow of death, it is she who consoles him by telling him that God will deliver them from the menace of the invaders. When the king asks the Dajāzmāch to give him Tobyā in marriage, the father is anxious not to give his consent without first consulting her, for he knows that "Tobyā is too strict on matters of religion" (p.81). And as he suspected, she rejects the proposal outright on grounds of religion. When the king is thus forced to be converted to her religion, she considers the event not only as her own victory, but also as the triumph of Christianity (as is implicit in her poem).

Tobyā is not only pious but also an accomplished actress. Her disguise as a young man (not only in her dressing but also in her voice, carriage, manners) takes in the courtiers, the king, his uncle, his cousin, and even her own brother, who couldn't recognize her at first. But, as far as her symbolic significance is concerned, this is an accidental attribute necessitated by the exigencies of plot. It is a feature taken for granted as is Wāhed's pretending to be her when he marries the king's cousin. As far as the meaning of the novel goes what matters is that her charm, beauty, and piety cause the conversion of their old enemies to Christianity. It is this factor that the narrator underlines when he sums up her role: "... due to one woman all believed [in Christ] (p.86).

Since the focus of the story dwells more on the movements, actions, and thoughts of the Christian characters, the antagonists tend to be shadowy. Even then, the greed of the slave merchants, the brutality of the soldiers, and the jealousy of the courtiers have the cumulative effect of making their king's virtuosity stand out in sharp relief. But the plot seems to suggest that however kind, wise, and mighty he may be, he still falls short of being the ideal monarch as a Muslim. It is worth noting that it is the Christian Tobyā who inspires love in the king and his cousin, not the other way round. The moral of this situation seems to be that love and happiness go with Christianity, for it is he and his cousin who abandon their religion seeking love and happiness from the Christians. After the symbolic marriages, the narrator thus declares: "... Joy reigned over their household for many generations; their government became strong and their faith ever firm" (p.88). It is not only their actions but also the names of the two protagonists which have an illustrative significance. The idealized Tobyā seems to symbolize Ethiopia. "Wāhed", according to the king, means "the infidels and the Amhara are united" (p.87). The characters are, however, flat and static. Their speeches, which are rather sparse and occasionally set off from the narrator's statements by three vertical dots, instead of quotation marks or

indented margins , hardly bear the stamp of their idiosyncracies.

There is little distance between the characters and the authorial narrator. He shares the protagonists' outlook, values and prejudices. What pleases them (such as the merchant's generosity) pleases him,too. What angers them(such as the jester's derision of Christianity) angers him, too. He is a reliable guide to the values of the implied author. To ensure that the narratee is on the right track, he constantly intrudes into the story to explain, to generalize, to evaluate, and to emphasize or underscore the events and their significances.

Whenever he enters the minds of the characters, which is not very frequently, the inside view he affords us often comes in paraphrases and explanatory commentary. Wāhed's fear is the only extensively depicted psychological state in this novel. It is presented in a manner which shows the character's feelings via his action, speech, and physical state. Here are a few excerpts:

> When it became very dark, he lost his way and his courage began to wane. As he looked ahead and to the back, to the left and to the right, he thought that all that he saw was a hyena, a leopard, a lion. He said, any moment the hyena will sneak up from behind and bite my side, the leopard will leap out and strangle me, the lion will crush me. Woe is me! If I now escape from one the other is likely to get me! As he said this, fear gripped him. But what could he do? This was his fate. Besides, he was only a raw youth. While all this was happening, Wāhed did not stop slowly moving in the direction of the market place that he had seen. At one point he saw in the darkness something like a bush. He thought that it was the real lion with its four legs, and his soul seemed to leave his body. With his legs shaking, when he again stared hard that false lion created by fear seemed to move hesitantly, as if undecided

about whether or not to spring at him.

(p.16)

But Wāhed was all alone. Apart from his own shadow which mingled with the darkness, he had no other companion at the time. When that lifeless bush which was vainly taken for a lion wouldn't move, Wāhed changed his own course. But when he looked back at this fear-inspired bush-lion, he thought it was following him. His legs began to shake again and refused to carry him. Wahēd became so paniky that every dark object he saw appeared to him as some beast. Changing his direction he then walked up and down. And all of a sudden something like a small cave sprung up on his left side and brought shivers allover his body. The shock caused a cold sweat to run down his spine. When I escaped from the first lion I have ended up facing the second one. This would be the end of me, said Wāhed as his dread increased.

(p.17)

In this way the dramatization of Wāhed's fear runs on for nearly four pages. Although the scene is potenially suspenseful, the narrator's constant assurances that it is merely a boy's fantasy reduce its full realization. While this depiction heightens the impression of Wāhed's sacrifices (as he would also soon be mercilessly beaten), its adverse effect is to magnify the disparity between Wāhed's adult-like seriousness of purpose and the limits of his maturity (age-wise).

In the rendition of some scenes in which the characters' points of view are accommodated, the perspective is unexpectedly altered, thereby undermining its credibility. This is the case in the description of the dramatic emergence into view of the royal escorts. As the group advances towards the hill on which Tobyā and her father have taken refuge, details which could not be accessible to these two watchers are offered. Tobyā has been telling

her father that soon all the invaders will pass by, as their number has begun to slim down. The two could then pass the night on the hill and the next day travel to the area evacuated by the invaders.

> The moment she finished saying this, however, something dark like the rain-clouds of July appeared from the far end of the plain. While father and daughter were wondering about what it was, it could be seen roaring and spiralling up as if it was driven by a whirlwind. It was actually the dust raised by the hooves of the horses of the royal escorts riding at the front. Gradually, the party came in full view. Two groups of escorts could be made out. As father and daughter watched this, they were again gripped by fear and sorrow, and they began to lose hope. So they prayed to God and the angels for deliverance. But as the groups of escorts drew nearer, the sounds of drums and horns, intermingled with the noise of the wind, could be heard. The reflections from the men's golden head-dresses, footwear, and other garments and from the decorated harnesses of the horses and mules blended with the brightness of the sun and made the eyes blink. In the middle of the two goups of escorts, a few people could be seen huddled together. The king was riding a mule that ached not so much under his weight as under that of its golden harness. A silken canopy embroidered with gold was held out for him on both sides. As he rode, the king was chatting with a few of his coutiers. But as the sun was beginning to set that graceful march suddenly came to a standstill as if its advance were angrily checked.
>
> (pp.43-44)

In the above description, such details as the party's

initial appearance in the form of a cloud of dust and then a dense forest are consistent with the distance from which Tobyā and her father are watching the scene. So also are the sounds of drums and horns. Although it is natural for these first impressions to become more accurate as the escorts get closer to the hill, it would still be difficult for the two observers to see much more than the glitter of the escorts' garments. From that vantage point they could neither discern particular garments worn by the escorts nor identify the king in the crowd surrounding him. After all, the narrator himself has given us an idea of the height of the hill when he earlier said that, to someone looking up from the foot of the hill, even a huge elephant standing at the top of the hill will not appear bigger than the size of "a fly". By the same logic, Tobyā and her father can only see a large crowd of people, not identify specific details of individual items of apparel or particular persons whom they have never met before. Hence such details as the head-dress and the information about the king (including whether he is chatting or silent, and his mule's aching from the weight of her harness) could only be offered from the omniscient narrator's perspective. Likewise, in the subsequent description of the royal camp, such details as the small objects stuck on the peak of the king's tent would be too minute for the observers to identify in detail. So, eventhough the narrator reports that Tobyā and her father "knew" that the emblem of the sobade'āt (centaur) fastened on the flag was the idol worshipped by the "infidels", it seems that he is projecting his own omniscience onto their perspective.

Most commentators have attributed this work's merit entirely to its linguistic style. Thus Gérard , who seems to be echoing other people's view on this score (since he doesn't read Amharic), declares:

> Quite justifiablly, this rather naive and in some respects almost Victorian story, has been chiefly commended for its style.... But in Amharic aesthetic thought, it is just this wealth and

> complexity, this ability to summon up all the varied resources of the language, this virtuosity in manipulating sound values, hyperboles, double entendres, and proverbs, which make the book worthy of admiration and account for its popular success. (p. 283)

Molvaer goes one step further and asserts: "The book is valued for its style, and the author may have written it as a purely artistic exercise; it is "art for art's sake" (p.8). The vividness with which some of the scenes and characters are described is undeniably a notable stylistic quality. But it is simply an exaggeration to say the same about the rather dull language of the dialogues or the rest of the non-descriptive passages. As for its being an "art for art's sake", one need only note the rather obvious didactic exemplification of Christian values and political benevolence. One must note the similarities between the narrator's positive attitude to the Muslim king's first decree (in which he seeks to establish a harmonious relationship between the soldiers and the peasants) and Āfawarq's praise for Menilek's alleged alleviation of the plight of the peasants (in his Dāgmāwi Menilek, Rome, 1909) to realize the element of political exemplification. Still, the didacticism in this work is not as thinly-veiled and dry as it is in Heruy's and Germāchaw's novels, for instance. Dialogues and narratorial commentary, the standard vehicular devices in other didactic works, are not used here for openly preaching the author's views. Unlike the linguisic style, Āfawarq's methods of forging an organic unity between plot and theme has not received sufficient critical attention. So are his techniques of constructing a tight and symmetrically structured plot, an aspect in which the work excells over many later novels.

Notes and References

1. In difference to Feqrē and Āsfāw, who both refer to the story teller as "author", I shall refer to him throughout my study as "narrator". He is the "voice" or "speaker" in the text. He tells the story either omnisciently, from without (as "authorial narrator"), or as a participant (a "narrating character"). In line with contemporary practice, I shall reserve for the writer who is in flesh and blood, in this case Āfawarq, the term "real author" whenever the context demands such a distinction. I shall use "implied author" to refer to the real author's fictional second self which, like the omniscient narrator, is not a character but a textual construct. As Wayne Booth puts it in his The Rhetoric of Fiction, second edition (Chicago, 1983), " 'the implied author' chooses, consciously or unconsciously, what we read; we infer him as an ideal, literary, created version of the real man; he is the sum of his own choices" (pp.74-75). In hypothetical terms, this implied author is the creator of the narrator as well as the events and the characters. For a more detailed discussion of this topic, see also Gérard Genette, Narrative Discourse, translated by Jane E. Lewin (Oxford, 1980).

2. Āsfāw Dāmtē, "Āndānd Nātboch Sela Āmāreñña Tebaba Qālāt", Yakātit, 4, no. 5 (1973 E.C.) (27-30), p.30.

3. "Coincidence in the Novel: a Necessary Technique", College English, 29, no.25 (1968) (373-388), p.373.

4. Many commentators (including Gérard, Kane, Āsfāw) refer to the antagonist characters as "pagans", just as the authorial narrator often does. But there are many evidences in the text which suggest that these people are Muslims. The kind peasants tell Wāhed that their son was kidnapped and sold into slavery by "Muslim" merchants (p.26). Wāhed's master is also reported to be a "Muslim" merchant (p.79). While defending the equality of all

religions during his first encounter with Tobyā and her father, the king repeatedly refers to the Creator as "Allah" (pp.49-50). Just as the Christian characters refer to their opponents as "āramanē", the other side, too, refer to them as "kafir" (both words mean "non-believer" or "infidel", although "āramanē" also carries the connotation of being brutal). In Ge'ez religious texts such as the Maṣehāfa Senkesār, references to the Muslims as "āramanē" is not uncommon. Āfawarq, too, shows a similar religious prejudice not only in this novel but also in Dāgmāwi Menilek, where he alternately refers to the Dervishes both as "Muslims" and "āramanē" (pp.56-57).

5. The Poetics of Prose, translated by Richard Howard (Oxford, 1977), p.82.

6. Donald Levin, Wax and Gold: Tradition and Innovation in Amhara Culture (Chicago, 1972), pp. 67-68.

7. "Introduction to the Study of the Narratee", in Reader-Response Criticism: from Formalism to Post-Structuralism, edited by Jane P. Tompkins (Baltimore, 1980) (7-25), pp.20-21.

8. Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature (London, 1975), p.144. The Marquise who is referred to in this quotation is a character in Alexander Pushkin's The Queen of Spades.

9. "Point of View in Ethiopian Fiction", The Ethiopian Herald, 6 September 1970.

10. According to Dastā Takla Wald's Āddis Ya-Āmāreñña Mazgaba Qālāt (Addis Ababa, 1962 E.C.), "elf" is a sum equivalent to ten thousand, and "waqēt" is a unit of measurement for gold weighing twenty eight grams. The ransom of "elf waqēt" of gold would hence be equivalent to 280,000 grams (or 280 kilo grams) of gold.

11. Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, The Nature of

Narrative (London, 1966), p.88.

12. In his book Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film (Ithaca, 1978), Seymour Chatman defines "point of view" as "the physical place or ideological situation or practical life-orientation to which narrative events stand in relation.... Point of view does not mean expression; it only means the perspective in terms of which the expression is made. The expression and the perspective need not be lodged in the same person" (p.153). Of the three types of point of view which he distinguishes, the two that would be used in this study are:

a/ perceptual point of view __ "literal: through someone's eyes (perception)"

b/ conceptual point of view __ "figurative: through someone's world view (ideology: conceptual system)" (p.151)

Chapter Two

HĀDDIS ĀLAM

I

One of the new features appearing in Heruy's work is the use of a preface for directly expounding the didactic aims of the author and how these are translated in the portrayal. This practice has been pursued by later writers such as Germāchaw and Makonnen, whose works are also heavily didactic. In the Preface to the above novel, Heruy explains that he has used the fictional arguments between an educated young man and a traditional priest to make some practical suggestions. He says that if the clergy "earnestly read the exemplifications in the book, they will find it helpful for reforming the obsolete practices that have wrongly become part of the religious tradition." As is implicit in the analogy that he uses in the Preface, the aesthetic pleasure of the story seems to derive primarily from the lessons or wisdom it offers:

> Even a farmer cannot reap what he has sown unless he first digs the ground, removes the weeds, and waters the plants. But when he finally gets the fruits of his labour, he will be pleased; he won't bother about his past pain. When a reader, too, goes through a book and finds the secret message which harmonizes with his views, he will be pleased. He won't be preoccupied with the thought of how lengthy and tiresome his reading has been.
>
> (p.2)

Heruy here motivates his reader not by the promise of an exciting story (on the contrary, he warns him not to tire too easily), but by the promise of gaining some practical knowledge (if he is patient enough in his reading). The Preface thus plays an important role in monitoring the

reader's expectations right from the outset. Other elements which reinforce this function are the title, the sub-title, and even the authorship note. The title Hāddis Ālam ("New World") is suggestive of the type of society that the application of the recommendations in the novel is supposed to produce. The sub-title, "Domicile of the Modest and the Benevolent", characterizes the reformed clergy and the Church. In place of the author's name on the title-page, we are given the note: "Written by an Ethiopian who strongly desires the reform of his country's Church". Such repeated clues are indications of the author's over-concern with getting his message across to the reader.

The division of the novel into chapters and the labelling of each section with its own heading are also new features which are lacking in Āfawarq's novel. Many of the headings are subordinate clauses (such as "about Āwwaqa's refusal to marry the woman selected for him by his relatives") that generally name the main event in the chapter. No firm criterion seems to have been used as the basis for the division into the given chapters. Āwwaqa's marriage, for instance, could have been treated as one event in a single chapter. But instead it is treated in two chapters, one dealing with his rejection of the bride selected by his relatives and the other dealing with his own choice of a suitable bride and his wedding. The chapters do not represent the stages of a progressively unfolding plot, for the story does not have such a plot.

Another new feature in Heruy's work is the use of drawings. There are eleven such drawings altogether and their function appears to be to represent the scenes in the story. Under each drawing, there is a caption indicating the scene it is supposed to illustrate. The contents of some of these drawings, however, is inconsistent with what is implied or reported in the story. One example is the drawing that depicts the clash between Āwwaqa and the father-confessor when the former erects a tombstone over his father's grave. According to the narrator's report, the priest notices the new tombstone accidentally, while strolling alone in the churchyard. He then rushes to Āwwaqa's

home and reprimands him for not building a wooden hut instead. The clash therefore occurs not in the graveyard but at Āwwaqa's home. Yet, what is shown in the drawing is Āwwaqa and the old priest standing on opposite sides of the tombstone and confronting eachother. The content of the drawing thus becomes a summary of the incident rather than a representation of the scene.

Heruy goes one step further than Āfawarq in the particularization of the identity of the characters and in the concretization of the temporal and spatial references. The central character is called "Āwwaqa" (which literally means "he knew"). As the essential role of this character is to set an example by his enlightened actions, the name has an allusive function, too. But many of the other characters are identified by ordinary names. The representative of the traditionalists, the father-confessor, is called "Sabāgādis", and here there is no obvious link between the name and the character's role. Āwwaqa's mother does not even appear in the story, but she is given the name "Endāshāsh". Other minor characters such as the speakers at the two synods are also identified by name although they have no role outside the congregations.

The citation of the names of places where the events of the story occur is also indicative of an attempt to create a closer referential correspondence between the fictional world and external reality. Āwwaqa is born in Tagulat, where most of the story is set. He travels to Europe via Djibouti and is educated in Paris. When Endalebbu is taken ill, Āwwaqa fetches a physician for him from Addis Ababa. The resolutions of the synods are sent to the churches and monasteries in Zequālā, Axum, Dabra Bizan, Qirqos, Martulā Māryām, Dimā, Hāyq, and Gishan. When looking for a suitable future wife, Āwwaqa "wanders" in the areas between Qabbanā and Gullallē in Addis Ababa.

Likewise, although the years are not mentioned, the narrator clearly indicates the day and hour of some of the events. The first synod begins its deliberations on the eighth of Sanē (June) and the second one on the eighth of Hedār(November). Āwwaqa is married at St George's Church in Addis Ababa on a Sunday night at twelve o'clock. He and

his bride leave for Tagulat on Monday morning and arrive at their home "on the fourth day, at three o'clock in the afternoon" (p.35). In the overall structure of the plot, the particularization of details has not been moulded into an integral part. To the episodic plot and the exemplification of desireable practices, such concrete details remain of peripheral significance. But the shift from Āfawarq's larger-than-life characters to the ordinary members of the society, from abstract values to contemporary social problems, from generalized referential details to more specific ones suggest an inclination to objectify the fictional rendition of reality, a tendency to make the portrayal give an illusion of real life.

II

Hāddis Ālam uses a plot that is constituted by a series of episodes which are loosely strung together. The story has no central conflict which can link up these isolated incidents and serve as the framework for developing a unified theme. Early in his youth the protagonist enters the service of a Frenchman and appeals to him for help to be educated in France. No indication is given as to how and where the two people come to meet. Āwwaqa stays in Paris for seven years and learns language (possibly French) and some unspecfied craft. No details are given about his life in Paris except that he was initially laughed at by his schoolmates because of the darkness of his skin. On his return home he clashes with his relatives who criticize him for wearing European-style clothes. The incident is used not only for arguing in favour of such garments but also for criticizing the unelightened practices of the conservative folk. Āwwaqa's relatives think that his suit made him look rather "as graceless as a kid" and they urge him to switch to the traditional clothes. When he refuses to do so, they assume that he has become insane and consequently, they tie him up and take him to a spring of holy water so that he may get cure. After keeping him tied up for a month, they realize their inability to make him follow their ways and so set him free. The vehicular nature

of the incident is obviuos enough in the thinly-veiled speeches of the protagonist and in its lack of probability.

In another incident which occurs a short time later, Āwwaqa again clashes with his relatives. Like the previous one, no prior preparation is made to pave the way for this one, too. When his father suddenly falls ill, Āwwaqa goes to Addis Ababa and fetches a physician to treat him. But his relatives become angry with him for not consulting the local scribe who knows magical cures. As his father's illness worsens , Āwwaqa sends his servant to the nearby town of Ānkobar to make a phone call to Gondar and inform his sisters about their father's illness. The telephonist who receives the call in Gondar passes on the message to the sisters. They ask him where the messenger from Ānkobar is and he explains that the message was sent by telephone. But as they presumably don't know what a telephone is, he has to explain to them that it is "the Faranjs' [whitemen's] device" for transmitting sound by using wire. The astonished women wait for their husbands to return home and then break the news to them. The latter assure their wives that as it is the devil that carries the message by wire the information that is conveyed in this way is unreliable. "The devil alters the message by reporting falsely the death of those who are well and alive" (p.10). Satisfied with this explanation the daughters decide to ignore the telephone message. Meanwhile their father's condition becomes very critical and this worries the relatives that he might die before his daughters arrive. So they ask Āwwaqa whether he has sent the messenger to Gondar. He replies that as it would take a month for a messenger to travel to Gondar, the message has been delivered by telephone. Like the sisters they, too, dom't know what a telephone is and become annoyed by his failure to send a messenger instead. To the urban readers who were not so ignorant about the telephone, the satirical intent of the depiction would not be missed. But the inadequacy and inconsistency of the details mar the rendition. If Āwwaqa's sisters live in the town of Gondar where the telephonist delivers the message personally, how come they haven't ever heard of the telephone before? Besides, one of the husbands is said to be an official

(a"kantibā"). The narrator also reports that Āwwaqa's sisters came for the preparation of the tazkār (banquet given in commemoration of someone's death). But he does not indicate what persuaded them to change their mind.

Incidents of the above kind also occur when Āwwaqa clashes with his relatives over: whether or not to mourn the death of a kinsman by dressing shabbily, by inflicting physical pain on one's self and by wailing aloud; erect a tombstone rather than build a wooden hut to mark a grave; prepare a lavish tazkār; marry only a partner chosen by one's self; and sanctify marriage by receiving the Sacrament. The incidents in which these issues are raised are presented in a chronological order and provide Āwwaqa (and, by proxy, Heruy) with suitable contexts to speak out against some of the old practices and prejudices. The incidents are not effected by logical necessity. The illness and death of Endalebbu, for instance, comes unexpectedly, in order to facilitate the arguments over the use of modern medicine, the telephone, and the tazkār. The convening of the synods and the desire for reconcilation on the part of Āwwaqa's relatives, too, are developments which do not convincingly emerge as logical consequences of preceding circumstances. Although Āwwaqa's clash with the old priest regarding the tazkār for the late Endalebbu is a minor matter between two ordinary people, the narrator presents it as an issue of national signficance:

> All of Āwwaqa's views and actions regarding his father's tazkār, and his arguments with Mammerē Sabāgādis on this matter became known in Shawā, Gondar, Gojjām, Tegrē, Wallo, and in the other midland and distant places. Wherever the scholars met they begun to debate the issue, with some of them supporting Āwwaqa and others arguing about the problem of abandoning their old customs.
>
> As news of this argument spread wide, it came to the ears of the Echagē. When he heard about it [i.e., Āwwaqa's arguments], he said that this was a serious issue which should be considered by a synod. So a meeting of all the scholars was called

to settle the matter. They, too, were pleased that the meeting was called.

(p.18)

While these synods constitute important developments in the story (in terms of conveying the major theme of effectng reforms in the practices of the clergy), little attempt is made to render them plausible by providing details of how Āwwaqa's arguments came to assume a national significance within such a short time.

As the focus of the narration is on external matters, the narrator rarely enters a character's mind to present thoughts and feelings directly. In fact, apart from Āwwaqa and Sabāgādis, there is no other character whose thought is reported even indirectly. In the case of Āwwaqa, who is not the meditating type, what the narrator frequently does is paraphrase and repeat the same kind of mental reaction:

> When Āwwaqa's plan to use his education for the service of his government and the attainment of a better life was frustrated by such opposition right from the beginning, he became very sad. He cursed the day he decided to return home and began thinking of going back to Paris.
>
> (p.7)
>
> ---
>
> When Āwwaqa heard all this, he became very sad. He was frustrated by the disharmony between his views and those of his relatives. He made a firm decision to return to Paris....
>
> (p.8)

The characters in this novel are shallow and shadowy. Most of them do not appear more than once or twice, and when they do, they have only a single collective role — opposing or supporting changes advocated by Āwwaqa. Although he is not as much idealized as Tobyā is, the protagonist is always shown to be correct and serves as the mouthpiece of the implied author. Sabāgādis is an embodiment of

conservatism, and his acceptance of the views of Āwwaqa when they are finally reconciled is only half-hearted. The speeches of these two major characters serve as the vehicle for the transmission of the arguments of the protagonists and antagonists of change in the society. But, unlike in the later novel Ār'āyā, the narrator does not make extensive and sermonizing commentary.

Chapter Three

ĀR'ĀYĀ

I

Some Ethiopian commentators suggest that Germāchaw's work set a higher literary standard for the Amharic novel. A columnist writing on the English edition of Mēnen acclaims the work as "one of the modern great novels". He thinks that "quite unlike many Amharic books, 'Araaya' is written with theme, plot, characterization and style taken into consideration."[1] In his brief article on the development of Amharic prose fiction, Makbeb Gabayyahu declares: "Ār'āyā extended the horizon of Amharic literature. It gave it more breadth and new techniques of presentation."[2] In a similar article, Āsfāw Dāmtē says: "The novel is of a much higher standard in terms of fiction writing techniques than any of the novels that had been published until then. Plot, dialogue, characterization and description are clearly evident [sic] in 'Araya'."[3] Nevertheless, these commentators[4] do not provide a textual evidence to support their claims. And despite the presence of some innovative elements, the essential methods of conveying themes are hardly more artistic than those of the previous novels.

Continuing Heruy's didactic practice, the author announces in the Preface what lessons the work is intended to give to the reader. His objective in writing the novel appears to be four-fold: 1/ to "share" with the reader the ideas he has acquired from those who are knowledgeable on matters of nation-building; 2/ to forewarn those young Ethiopians who aspire to serve their country about the many obstacles that could face them and the need for perseverance in this regard; 3/ to remind them that it is possible to serve one's country "anywhere, anytime," so long as there is the good-will; 4/ to refresh the memory of those who were around at the time, and to inform the younger generation, about the sufferings of "thousands" of Ethiopians during the Italian invasion.

From the very outset, the sub-title, "The Story of an Ethiopian", leads the reader to anticipate some kind of a biographical narrative in which the objectives of the author will be fulfilled through what the title-character does and through what he experiences. This expectation is further reinforced by the contents of the first four chapters. In the first chapter, Ār'āyā's family background, his disposition, and local education are reported in more details than those of Āwwaqa in the previous novel. In the second chapter, the circumstances of his encounter with his future benefactor and his preparation for the trip to Paris are reported. In the third chapter, there is an ellipsis of the details of his journey to France and his fourteen years stay in Paris (since the chapter opens with a summary of his school life in France). The same chapter presents reports of his tour of major European cities and his readiness to start work. In the fourth chapter he declines his benefactor's request that he marry her granddaughter and settle down in France. He explains to her that his aim in coming to France with her was to acquire "civilization and knowledge" so as to serve his country:

> Now that God has helped me to successfully complete my study, I feel an even greater responsiblity to fulfill my first ambition. My desire to serve my country has not waned; my enthusiasm has become even more vigorous. More than ever before, I feel a strong love for my country and a sense of duty to serve her. My studies in school, my readings of history, and my observations of the conditions of life around here pesuade me of my people's backwardness. When I am day and night desiring that they reach this level of advancement soon enough, and when my service in this regard would be useful to them, how can I neglect them and settle down here?
>
> (p.26)

Satisfied with the nobility of his ambition, his benefactor blesses his decision in a sermomizing speech of two and a

half pages without interruption and promises to send him some money through the bank. His preparation for the task of speeding up his country's modernization thus completed, Ār'āyā starts his journey to his homeland.

Until this point the story moves at a fast pace. The summary form of the presentation and the hero's focus on his forthcoming life in his country suggest that these four chapters are intended to pave the way for the main action to take off. Furthermore, given the omission of vital details regarding his experiences on the journey to France and how he adjusts to his new environment during his long stay there, the logic of the narration persuades the reader to expect a similar ellipsis of the details of what transpires on the journey home. After all, the hero himself appears to be very eager to reach his homeland soon and start engaging in the crucial business. To sustain the reader's interest in Ār'āyā's forthcoming task, the narrator needs to create the impression of a speedy journey by summarizing or omitting digressive details. The sense of urgency and patriotic fervour implicit in the hero's pronouncements coupled with the preceding treatment of "twenty six" years of his life within a space of just sixteen pages reinforces the reader's anticipation of such a handling of the journey home. But what the narrator does is to use seventy pages just to deal with a journey of no more than two weeks. Nothing significant occurs during this time as the hero is idle, except for talking and meditating. Nor are the lengthy dialogues and commentaries relevant for advancing the action as such, since they are not indispensable to the subsequent course of events. Their style is dull and their subject matter is dry. Hence they have the effect of slowing the pace of the story. In contrast to the impression of the rapid passage of time generated by the brief treatment of Ār'āyā's past "twenty six" years of life, this two-week long journey seems to have lasted for ages.

As has been pointed out earlier, one of Germāchaw's objectives is to impart useful advice to the reader. Here, consequently, he uses dialogue primarily as a vehicle for the direct transmission of such advice. That is what is

attained by the vehicular dialogues in which Ār'āyā is engaged with five other passengers. These people extensively discuss such subjects as nationalism, religion, Ethiopian agriculture, Italy's colonial ambition, French colonialism, and the cultural differences between the East and the West. Little effort is made to integrate these topics into a unified theme that runs through the rest of the story. Nor do the other characters ever reappear again once the ship reaches Djibouti.

Generally, the conversations start casually, while the characters are dining or relaxing on the ship and end likewise. Then follows the hero's meditation over the subject discussed or the narrator's commentary on some other subject. Later, the characters casually meet again, talk about a different issue and part again, with the hero's meditation or the narrator's commentary coming next. Since this pattern repeats itself, the interval between the dialogues enables the author to avoid making the characters abruptly switch from one desired topic to another unrelated topic during the same session. But, since the various speakers are more enlightened and their reasonings more sophisticated than those in Hāddis Ālam, the arguments they forward are most of the time convicing. Still, the language style of the speakers is undifferentiated and for the most part formal.

As in the previous novels, formal introduction of a character's speech by reporting tags such as "Ār'āyā put to him this question" (p.75) and "the priest continued by saying the following" (p.79) is common if not the rule. Unlike the two previous novels, here most of the speeches of the characters are set off from the main body of the narration by presenting them in new paragraphs or within quotation marks. Although a few of them might have resulted from typographical errors, the inconsistencies in the methods of presenting speech hamper smooth reading. Some speeches start without quotation marks and end with one or vice versa (pp.78-79). In some cases a character's speech is presented in a new paragraph that has neither quotation marks nor a reporting tag but initial dashes to indicate his turn (pp.66-67). In such cases the reader's only guide is the

reporting tag at the very beginning of the dialogue. There are also other instances on which there are neither reporting tags nor quotation marks nor dashes to set off one character's speech from another's. One needs to go back a few pages, for instance, to trace the speaker of the second paragraph on p.38, the third paragraph on p.39, and the third and fourth paragraphs on p.40 because the sudden omisssion of the dashes has mixed up the speeches and made them contradictory. On top of this some of the speeches (such as the Russian professor's uninterrupted four-page long discourse, pp.40-44) are so lengthy that they sound more like classroom lectures rather than an informal chat on a train.

One factor which obviates the didactic orientation of the chapters on this journey is the transparency of the dialogues (in terms of their contexts) and the commentaries. When Pontignac and Ār'āyā discuss Ethiopian agriculture, for instance, the attempt to feed the reader with practical information on this score is too evident in Ār'āyā's elaboration of why the agricultural development is retarded. Pontignac says that if Ethiopia were to use modern farming methods, its proximity to Europe would enable it beat the competition for export by Australia, India, Madagascar, South Africa, Senegal, Congo, and Latin America. To this Ār'āyā replies by enumerating the main obstacles to achieve this: the lack of sufficient capital and modern education; the lack of access to the sea; the high charges on goods carried by train to Djibouti; the lack of markets for Ethiopian products due to the tough competition; "the various political problems" (pp.56-57). Apart from such dialogues, the narrator's commentary is also used for conveying some information on the history, geography, and economy of not only Ethiopia but also other countries. Thus such places along the route of the protagonist's journey as Marseilles, the Mediterranean region, Port Said, and the Suez Canal are described extensively, as an end by itself and in a form typical of school textbooks. Here are some examples of such commentary:

The port city of Marseilles was founded by the Phoenicians in about 600B.C. and has since then been an important trading centre. French products coming from the region lying behind are exported to Africa, the Far East, and the regions of the extreme south and west through this port. French imports from these regions also pass through it. Today Marseilles is the second major French city, with a population of around one million. Apart from being a commercial centre, the city is also a meeting point for people from the East and the West, and for this reason the place is crowded with other nationals such as Italians, Greeks, Armenians, Chinese, Negroes, Indians, and Arabs. Marseilles has many big industries. Its oil, soap, and fish processing factories are widely known. Ship-building is also a well-established industry. The number of ships calling at the port per annum is very high.

(p.47)

This passage now called the Suez Canal is a man-made link between the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea. The joining of the two seas has contributed considerably to the expansion of trade and the spread of civilization. Before 1869 the only route for travelling from Europe to East Africa and East Asia was by sailing around the southern tip of Africa. After the opening of the Canal, the journey which initially took many months was reduced to just a few weeks.

As the opening of the Canal brought good fortunes to Egypt, today the prosperity and beauty of its cities can rival those of the bigger nations. The Canal also opened a new chapter in the history of the people along the Red Sea coast. Realizing that the Canal would turn it into the corridor of the world, the powerful nations scrambled for a foothold in the areas along the coast of the Eritrean Sea.

(p.93)

> When one takes into account all this, one can appreciate the force that for thousands of years enabled Ethiopia to bring a humiliating defeat upon all the aggressors that dared to invade her. One can also appreciate why, in spite of her once being a great nation with an ancient civilization, Ethiopia has today lagged behind while European civilization flowed to the East. Who could dare to capture this fortress by braving the deserts, the mountains, and the gorges that surround her? Through which way could the new civilization penetrate into the heartland? Besides, as the route used by Europeans to travel to India and the Far East was via the southern tip of Africa before the opening of the Suez Canal, travel along the Red Sea was limited. In the Middle Ages, when the Christians and the Muslims were at war with each other, the European kings who knew about Ethiopia's Christianity tried to make some contact. But because of the inhospitality of the passage, the inaccessibility of the land, they could neither establish a firm relationship nor send their men to Ethiopia.
>
> (pp.95-96)

With the fifth and the sixth chapters filled up with such dry facts and directionless dialogues, the reader who looks for an entertaining story is tasked by boring details. The next few chapters, too, offer little excitement to revive the reader's interest. In the seventh chapter Ār'āyā meets with the secretary of the Ethiopian Consulate in Djibouti and the two engage in extensive discussions on how best to combat traditionalism. They also discuss Ethiopia's relation with Djibouti and the need to build a network of railway lines in other parts of the country. In the eighth chapter, Ār'āyā meets the consul himself and has a further discussion on the role of foreigners in Ethiopia. With their functions thus fulfilled, these new characters also disappear from the rest of the story. Ār'āyā next travels to Derē Dawā where he meets his former friend and other youths who wantonly waste their time by drinking.

After arguing with them about the harmfulness of alcohol to one's health and the country's progress, he leaves them behind and takes the train to Addis Ababa. In the nineth chapter, which is confined to his discussions with a fellow passenger, Ār'āyā's recommendations for reforming the administrative structure of the country are spelt out. In the tenth chapter, along with a continuation of this discussion at the passenger's home, there is a report on his tour of Addis Ababa and his meeting with an unnamed minister who promises to arrange for him an audience with the Emperor. By the time Ār'āyā appears before the Emperor, about half of the novel has been read without his engaging in any tangible action, apart from talking.

In the early part of the journey, Ār'āyā asks himself what kind of job he should take up when he settles down in Ethiopia. Then he answers his own question as follows:

> As I would be of little help if I engage in political or administrative work, it is better for me to serve in my field of training. If I am made head of a department in the ministry of agriculture, I can apply my knowledge im the development of farming and livestock production. After all, wasn't it because I knew that the prospects for our country's development lay in agriculture that I chose to be trained in this field? ... Although Ethiopia has a vast territory and great natural wealth, its products have a negligible share in the world market because its agriculture is not developed along modern lines. I will explain all this to the Emperor so that he will think about it.
>
> (p.46)

But when he meets the Emperor and the latter asks him in which field he wants to serve his country, Ār'āyā replies that he is ready to take whatever job the king assigns him. Accordingly he is ordered to work in a certain ministry. No adequate detail is given to indicate the nature of his work although it is obvious that it has very little to do with agrculture. The narrator's explanation as to why Ār'āyā

has changed his mind is not convincing: "As his only desire was to serve his country, he accepted without the slightest hesitation this job which the government urgently needed to be carried out" (p.176; emphasis mine). What the hero's pronouncements in the previous chapters lead one to expect is the hero's engagement in agricultural work. But in just three paragraphs the suggestions generated by the first half of the novel are arbitrarily countered. If the hero's subservience to the Emperor's desire had been intended to show the latter as a short-sighted despot, the reader would have comforted himself by interpreting the situation as one in which he encounters the first obstacle to realizing his longtime ambition. But the constant eulogistic references to the Emperor counter such an interpretation. Even in this same chapter, the narrator characterizes him as an exponent of modernization: "It was during the reign of Emperor Menilek that traditional Ethiopia showed its readiness to rid itself of the shackles of obsolete customs that made it lag behind other nations. Emperor Haile Sellassie's leadership enabled it to make tangible progress along the path of modern civilization " (p.170). Ār'āyā's compliance with the Emperor's wish "without the slightest hesitation" also counters such an iterpretation.

This illogical turn of events, however, is only a prelude to many others. After visiting his ageing mother in Tagulat, Ār'āyā takes up his post at the ministry whose identity is for no apparent reason undisclosed. And quite unexpectedly, he loses all his former enthusiasm for work. It is reported that he became irreligious and indolent and began to "indulge much in the pursuit of vain pleasure" (p.198). At the time that Ār'āyā prepares to return to Ethiopia, the narrator has been emphasizing his strength of character with statements such as: "The traits of uprightness, fortitude, and diligence, which marked him since his childhood, did not alter with time as was seen in many other young people" (p.23). These are reinforced by Ār'āyā's repeated vows to stand upto any challenges: "I know that there can be problems and obstacles in the future. But as I have stilled my will, nothing can defeat me. Besides,

once a man is determined to fulfill his ambition, he should never give in to any kind of pressure that may face him" (p.111). What insurmountable problems break such a resolution then? The jealousy of one individual! In a matter of six to seven months, the hero who used to feel great remorse for erring even "once in a thousand times" (p.198) now descends down to the abyss of decadence.

The narrator provides few concrete details that could enable the reader to appreciate the magnitude of the problem that causes this degeneration in Ār'āyā. We are told that within a short time of starting work, Ār'āya became very popular not only with his colleagues but also with the minister himself. This apparently causes the jealousy of his immediate boss, a director who is said to be arrogant and incompetent. When Ār'āyā makes proposals for rectifying some (unspecified) defects in the government's handling of "public affairs", the minister "earnestly" supports his suggestions. "But the director did not appreciate Ār'āyā's initiatives. In fact, he opposed his recommendations many times" (p.189). Apart from the director, the racial arrogance of a foreigner working in the same ministry is also reported to have precipitated Ār'āyā's demoralization. As no details are given about the nature of this foreigner's duties and exactly how he could interfere with Ār'āyā's day-to-day work, the reader fails to see the justification for the hero's xenophobia. That the foreigner is used merely as a vehicle is apparent in the lesson that Ār'āyā wants us to draw in relation to him: "He realized that all this problem was due to our people's being uneducated and our youth's lack of higher educational qualifications. the best solution for this [dependence on foreigners] is self-reliance" (p.197).

The director's ability to prevent the implementation of Ār'āyā's proposals (whatever they are) is not circumstantially authenticated. If the minister supports Ār'āyā's recommendations "earnestly", how come his junior refuses to carry them out? And why is it that the minister does not act to ensure their implementation if he believes they are essential? The narrator provides no answers either to these questions or to why Ār'āyā fails to use the options open to

him when his initiatives are frustrated in this way. Since he has the minister's support, he could appeal to him for a transfer to another department where his views could get acceptance or, if his recommendations are so crucial, take the case to the Emperor, or request the latter to transfer him where he could be more productive. But Ār'āyā takes none of these logical steps. Instead, he buckles under the first slight challenge and degenerates.

The challenge from the director seems intended to serve as an illustration of what the author describes in his Preface as "the many problems and trials that one could encounter when serving one's country". The very title of this chapter is meant to be indicative of this point since it is given as "Trial". The portrayal does not clearly indicate whether jealousy is here regarded as a purely moral issue or as a side-effect of the larger problem of incompetence. What is apparent is that it frustrates the hero's effort to be of some service to his country. The narrator uses the occasion to deliver a lengthy and allegorized sermon on the harm caused by jealousy, as in the following passage:

> Jealousy! How many have you destroyed? How many have you killed? How much goodwill have you poisoned? How many have you buried then? ... Look at what you have done since the days of Adam! See how much bloodshed, how many deaths you have left behind! From generation to generation you have been stealthily using your sharp blade to inflict damage day and night. Together with your compatriots Cruelty and Intrigue, you have thrived on evil. Speak about your deeds!
>
> "When I see something constructive, I get neither peace of mind nor sleep. I cannot restrain myself if I see anything benevolent."[5]
>
> What is the secret of your comfort in this world? Are you saying that the struggles of life sustain you? That is indeed true! But the necessities of life are now fulfilled through cooperation and consideration. Your divisive schemes are now condemned.

> Oh! so, Ignorance, too, has been siding with you? If it could be eliminated everyone would realize the need for giving priority to the interests of the whole society. Unity, Wisdom, Uprightness, coupled with Knowledge and Skill, have decided to destroy you! ... What are you grumbling about?
>
> "Don't be foolish! You wouldn't have seen me around if they had existed. I and they cannot co-exist. If they exist, you cannot find me around. If I exist, you canot find them around."
>
> (pp.193-195)

After the presentation of such a sermon, the story develops in a new direction. One night, Ār'āyā has a dream in which he sees himself pale and ragged. He is walking along a precipitous path that meanders and leads to the top of a mountain. Then his French benefactor suddenly appears and calls out to him to beware of the dangerous precipice and to change his path. Ār'āyā wakes up from his sleep at this point, interprets the precipitous path as being his own degeneration and then resolves to reform his defects. The next morning he submits his letter of resignation to the minister. Nothing is said about the minister's reaction either to Ār'āyā's degeneration or to his resignation from his job. Reporting the extent of Ār'āyā's degeneration, the narrator initially says: "If those who knew Ār'āyā in the past were to see him now, they wouldn't recognize him. How many new habits he had developed! How many vices he had accumulated!" (p.197). And this change occurs within a short period of "a few months" (p.200). But the speed at which he is rehabilitated is even more incredible ___ just a few hours! After the resignation the narrator says: "Ār'āyā had temporarily weakened his strong character. But as in the saying that if you cast away your nature it will come back at a gallop, Ār'āyā immediately regained his old strength without much difficulty" (p.201). Within the small space of a single chapter Ār'āyā is thus made to switch from one personality to another with little indication of the attendant details.

The arbitrary manipulation of the hero's conduct is even

more apparent in his monologue a few days after he settles down in his farming estate:

> My resignation was inappropriate. When I returned from France, I was confident that no difficulty, no frustration, would make me give in. But now, in a matter of six or seven months, I have been defeated by the jealousy of one vain person, forced to abandon my principles, and finally to give up my job. I have really been mistaken. I shouldn't have lost hope. I shouldn't have been hasty and easily demoralized. I should have persevered. I should have first appealed to His Majesty and revealed to him all my difficulties. He would have assigned me to somewhere else or disciplined the director.... Anyway, it is all over now. But I haven't come here seeking wealth, peace, and comfort for myself. I would still serve my country and people.... Under whatever circumstances I may be, as long as I am concerned for their welfare, I will be useful to my people.
>
> (p.210)

Through this self-criticism, an attempt is made to save the hero's credibility by countering the reader's scepticism of the changes in his character. At the same time, the self-criticism also serves as a means of making him spell out the lesson that the reader should draw from his experience: that patience and perseverance are needed to overcome the obstacles that undermine one's effort to serve one's nation. Immediately after the monologue, the narrator, too, repeats this same point when approving Ār'āyā's new determination. Ār'āyā now believes that he could serve his people by working on his parents' farmland. As before, this provides Germāchaw with a fictional context to put forward his recommendations for improving the country's agriculture. Accordingly, the narrator enumerates the Hero's schemes for the cultivation of a variety of crops using modern farming techniques, the establishment of a local public health centre, a school, and a peasants' cooperative. We

are not, however, told if the hero has been able to carry out his philanthropic schemes. But we are reminded again that his striving to accumulate wealth is partly to enable him to establish such projects. The author here has his eye on the gentry who own lots of land, as is evident in the reliable narrator's commentary:

> Certainly, there are a lot of people among the nobility who own a lot of property in land and in other forms. But the amount of their income and savings is very disproportional to the amount of land they have. In the first place, the practice of economical management has not taken firm root in our country and for this reason too much wealth is wasted. Secondly, because they don't have the necessary skill for systematically using their land, it doesn't give them the maximum yield. For this reason their wealth doesn't increase as much as it should. This is a great disadvantage to our country, for people will not appreciate the value of national sovereignty and the government's efforts unless they prosper. In the future, when the rich increase in number, they can establish useful projects that will benefit the nation as well as become the pride of the new generation.
>
> (p.221)

The narrator does not stop at reminding the nobility how they could increase their wealth and contribute to the good of their country by emulating Ār'āyā. He even goes as far as outlining concrete courses of action which the government should take. He repeatedly stresses that agriculture is the key to Ethiopia's future prosperity and progress. He recommends that the government improve seed and cattle breeds, introduce agricultural machinery, establish at the district level agricultural schools and distribution centres for higher quality seed, set up soft loan agricultural banks, build roads, and secure markets for Ethiopian products by establishing trade links with neighbouring countries. Once these recommendations have been conveyed,

the function of Ār'āyā's stay at his country estate seems to be fulfilled and so he is removed to a totally difffe-rent scene __the war fromt. With this shift the emphasis of the story, too, changes from propagating various measures for the cultural, economic, and administrative moderni-zation of the country to recording and appraising the events of the war with Italy. In the Preface, the author ambi-guously states:

> It is obvious that it is not an easy task to write about actual matters by treating them in exactly the way they had been. But to omit the facts and report what did not exist, just for the sake of embellishing the story, is not only to lose one's integrity but also to distort history. Hence it is the duty of the writer to get closer to the reality and to draw lessons from it.

Although the above statement may have been made in refe-rence to some controversial event which the author did not want to be explicit about, his insistence on maintaining fidelty to the facts of history could also explain why factual matters prdominate in the remaining fifteen chapters. In contrast to the previous part of the novel, the vehicular dialogues are now briefer and appear less frequently. Further-more, out of the fifteen chapters devoted to more or less chronicling the events of the war, about eleven present the hero as a passive observer.

Since the author's objective regarding this war is apparently to inform as well as to remind, he employs a variety of devices to report the events. Thus the scenes of the Emperor's initial departure from Addis Ababa, his march through Wallo, the Battle of Māychaw, the retreat to Addis Ababa, the Emperor's flight abroad, and the fall of Addis Ababa to the Italians are reported directly by the narrator, using Ār'āyā's presence on the scenes as a pretext. Details of the persecution of the residents of Addis Ababa, the rise of the patriotic resistance in the different parts of the country, and the deportation of Ethiopian prisoners to Asinara are relayed by means of two

letters that a friend writes to Ar'aya. The scenes of the Graziani massacre are described as an eye-witness reports the event to Ar'aya. Most of the details dealing with the British military assistance and the Emperor's return from exile are presented in a lengthy excerpt from the newspaper Sandaq Alamachen. These reports also include the names of many of the well-known leaders of the patriotic resistance.

The fictionality of the story becomes evident mainly in the four chapters in which the focus turns on Ar'aya and his associates. In the twenty first chapter, he organizes a local resistance group and launches a surprise attack on an enemy garrison. This chapter also reports the implausible intelligence-gathering mission of his future wife Serguta. In the twenty third chapter, Ar'aya climbs down from his ivory tower to the level of ordinary human beings and courts Serguta. In the twenty eighth chapter, the execution of Ar'aya's father-in-law and his own narrow escape provide us with the first fictional action that is flavoured with suspense. The story ends with Ar'aya, now the father of a son and living in Tagulat, being summoned to Addis Ababa. And true to his static character, he is full of enthusiasm about his coming struggle to speed up his country's modernization.

II

Ar'aya's role in this novel parallels that of Awwaqa in Heruy's novel (although the two works differ in the amount of background detail they offer about their heroes). We don't know whether Awwaqa had any local education or how he comes to know about Europe before his travel there. Nor do we know why the Frenchman comes to Ethiopia , how and where he meets Awwaqa, and whether he goes to France just for the sake of Awwaqa. The narrator does not specify the nature of Awwaqa's job with the Frenchman and his age when he joins him on the journey to France. But in the case of Ar'aya, we know that he has studied Amharic and Ge'ez for three years and that it is while attending a French mission school in Dere Dawa that he meets his future

benefactor. We are told that she is a wealthy aristocrat who lost her children during the First World War. She comes to Ethiopia to get solace in a peaceful place far away from where she could be reminded of her loss. During her visit to the mission school, she is introduced to Ār'āyā, who is recommended to her by an elderly French teacher. Being of a philantropic disposition and pressed by the loss of her children, she proposes to educate an Ethiopian in France. Ār'āyā grabs this opportunity to fulfill his strong desire to acquire the knowledge and skills of the Europeans.

Despite such differences in the amount of background detail, there are still some basic similarities in the way the two protagonists are motivated for Western education. Ār'āyā is authoritatively described as "intelligent" and "diligent" even as a child. He wants to acquire Western education because he realizes (after observing the life-style of the Europeans in Derē Dawā and Hārar) that the inferiority of the living standard of his countrymen is due to their lack of modern education. And he arrives at this conclusion at the age of about eight or nine years, before he even attends the traditional local schools. Āwwaqa, too, is characterized more or less similarly. "Being intelligent since his early childhood and hearing many things about Europe, he wished to travel there, acquire their knowledge and skills and become civilized like them " (p.4). In both cases, apart from the inspiration by news of European civilization, the desire for modern education seems to be linked with their being intelligent by nature. But, in spite of the postures in the case of Ār'āyā, their personality does not really develop with their age. After their return to their country, their vehicular role necessitates their static depiction as exemplary members of their society. Being mouthpieces of their authors, they have not been given any idiosyncratic traits that are not illustrative of some virtuous conduct to be emulated by others.

III

In the Nature of Narrative, Scholes and Kellogg point out that "the recording of specific facts" is one empirical way of representing external reality (p.87). In this novel, such a representation is found in the commentary in the history, geography, and economy of Ethiopia and the places along the route of the hero's journey home. The reports about the expedition to the northern front, the Battle of Māychaw, the harassment of the retreating soldiers, the Graziani massacre, and the deportation of political prisoners to Asinara bear a lot of factual details.[5] Germāchaw's own experience[6] also appears to have contributed to the vividness of the description of some of these incidents. Although they are more oriented towards the representation of actuality as in geography textbooks, the description of the natural scenery along the railway line from Djibouti to Addis Ababa, and the landscape in Māychaw, Tagulat, and Wabarā are vivid. There are also more descriptions of interiors and characters' physical appearance than in Heruy's work. The description of the banquet scene at the home of the traveller that Ar'aya meets is detailed but not on a hyperbolic scale as some of the descriptions in Āfawarq's novel:

> Part of the hall was covered with different types of carpets. There were also grass and mats [made from the leaves of palm trees] spread on the floor along the wall. Masobs wrapped in red clothes were placed here and there. Beside these stood a row of wicker tables with white clothes draping them. Nearby, there was a big madab concealed by a long curtain. Young servants stood here and there along the wall. Maids carrying enjarā and dest [clay pots] were hurriedly passing by. The usher called Ār'āyā, and after telling him to wait for him , disappeared behind the curtain. Soon he heard the old man saying in a gruffy voice, "where is he? Let him in!" The usher opened the curtain for Ār'āyā and told him to go in. As he entered, he saw many

noblemen and ladies sitting in groups of four or five around the masobs and dining. Supporting himself with red pillows and and sitting sideways on a matress covered with a beautiful bed-spread, the host was eating with the others. A fat, light-brown woman was sitting by his side . Near her, with her hands crossed, a maid stood facing the masobs. At her feet there was a row of about ten dishes and dests. Occasionally, she bent down, scooped out wat [stew] from the dest and placed it in front of her master. She also took some enjarā from the masob in front of her and placed it in front of each person. Some times, when her mistress signalled to her with a wink, she scooped the wat onto a dish and put it in the masobs before them. A ten-year old boy with his hair shaved around the edges was standing a little further away to the left hand side of his master and keeping away the flies with a long, white fly-whisk. Two to three boys were standing nearby, leaning against the wall and waiting for orders. Apart from the sound of chewing, the swish of the fly-whisk, and the gruffy voice of the master, nothing else was heard.

(pp.156-157)

Whereas the above description is presented as an illustration of the lavish life-style of the nobility, there are a few other descriptive passages whose purpose is not so didactic. In the chapter in which Ār'āyā courts Serguta, for instance, description is used to create an atmosphere of romance:

> Since the moment that they met, the hearts of the two young people were filled with one special feeling. There was something which made them restless. During the day or night, while working or eating, each one thought of only the other one,
>
> A few weeks passed in this way and Ār'āyā began to look for a pretext to meet her alone and declare his boundless love for her. One day, when

the golden frock of the setting sun was glowing with the red rays that enveloped the clouds, when the birds were chirping goodnight to her, when the herdsmen were singing sweet melodies and driving their cattle down the hill, when the echoes were repeating after them the songs, when all this was mingling with the evening breeze and tenderly caressing the flowers and other plants, making the village cheerful, Ār'āyā was walking alone and nursing his thoughts when he suddenly came face to face with Serguta.

(p.309)

Although the physical features of Ār'āyā do not receive descriptive attention, the other minor characters appearances do so. But these descriptions, as in the following passages, are merely referential:

M. Pontignac was about thirty years old. He was slim and tall. He was fine-featured, except that he had a sharp,pointed nose and very small eyes. His voice was not clear when he spoke. From his dialect one could tell that he was from southern France.

(p.54)

In the way he was dressed and spoke, Tāddasa was not different from the young Ethiopians at the train station. He wore large khaki trousers and leather sandals commonly used in a desert climate. He had no tie on him and the hem of his shirt loosely hang outside his trousers. On top of this he had wrapped himself in a natalā [light cotton cloak]. His hair-style was a gofarē [afro-syle], with only the edges near his ears and collar slightly trimmed.

(p.131)

Notes and References

1. "Girmachew Tekle Hawariat: Life and Works", Menen, 10, no.7 (1966) (30-33), p.30.

2. "Tāllāqu Darāsi Mānnaw?", Manan, 16, no.1 (1964 E.C.) (19-21), p.21.

3. "Modern Amharic Literature", Yekatit, 5, no.1 (1981) (22-24).

4. For a more detailed and critical appraisal of Ār'āyā, see Damessē Mānnāhelo's review in Weyeyet, 1, no.1 (1960), pp.71-81.

5. An insight into the factuality of the reports on the war can be gained by noting the many parallels with Richard Greenfield's account in his Ethiopia: A New Political History (London, 1965).

6. Gérard, who claims to have received his information from Germāchaw, reports: "He returned home [after studying in France] on the eve of the Italian war and following the Graziani massacre of February 1937, he was taken to Italy as a political prisoner. He stayed there until 1943" (p.330).

Chapter Four

ĀLMOT'HUM BEYYĒ ĀLWĀSHEM

I

Makonnen Endālkāchaw was a very prolific writer who is reputed to have written about nineteen works in the form of plays, novels, and essays.[1] His constant preoccupation was with moral and historical themes. Acccording to him, "A novel or a tale is a mirror which in the form of a diversion exposes man's vices so that he won't commit acts of brutality on his fellow men."[2]

His preoccupation with moral issues, however, seems to have prejudiced the judgement of his critics. Gérard thus categorically declares: "Apart from the author's style, there is nothing to redeem his works from the abysses of triteness where much of Amharic literature is still immersed" (p.306). As Gérard does not read Amharic and as he has to rely on a few translations and secondary sources, one is justified in regarding with extra caution his judgement on Makonnen's style. In his survey of Amharic literature Āmsālu Āklilu comments:

> We classify Makonnen Endālkāchaw's works in the category of Heruy Walda Sellāsē's works. But this is only in terms of themes. We do not mean that Makonnen's literary skill, especially his language style, could match Heruy's. When we try to apply the criteria of modern fiction to the works of Makonnen, we realize that their literary quality is very low. They completely lack the features which we see in other modern fiction. Their literary quality does not go beyond the level of the traditional Ethiopian literature of "Reproof and Advice".[3]

Āmsālu does not provide any textual evidence to support his claim. Nor does he specify what "criteria" of fiction Makonnen's works fail to measure up to, or which "features"

of modern fiction are "completely" lacking in them.

Mangestu Lammā, on the other hand, is more cautious in his comments: "... the tendency to openly moralize and preach the Holy Gospels in novels and plays puts him back to the traditional orbit of didacticism, in spite of the modern historical subject matter he has tackled." But then he goes further and asserts that Germāchaw is "technically more up-to-date" than Makonnen.[4] Nevertheless, he does not specify in what respects Germāchaw's didactic presentation could be "technically more up-to-date" than Makonnen's. An analysis of one of Makonnen's works can show that he was capable of writing stories in such a way that they would appeal to the reader and arouse his emotions unlike the dry works of the previous writers praised by the critics.

The story begins with a formal introduction of the protagonist who is a young man of twenty five years and lives in Dabra Berhān. Tamāchu is a self-sufficient farmer for he possesses three plots of farmland and has under his service a housemaid and two men-servants. In the preliminary exposition, the narrator does not directly name the hero's traits as in the novels of Heruy and Germāchaw. Instead, he tells us that Tamāchu liked living in a clean house, raising cattle, reading accounts of battles, and hunting wild animals in the nearby forest. Tamāchu particularly enjoys listening to stories of the exploits of Ethiopian warriors who vanquished their enemies by virtue of their skills in effectively using their spears and swords. The direction in which the plot would develop may not be obvious at this stage but the clues have already been given.

After this exposition, there comes the first action in the story. While hunting as usual, Tamāchu suddenly comes face to face with a leopard. In the ensuing fight both severely wound each other and collapse from loss of much blood. Alarmed by their master's long absence from home, the servants begin their search for him in the forest. In the course of this they come upon both hunter and prey lying on the ground in a pool of blood. They call for help, kill the leopard and carry both to their home. The narrator reports that, for a long time in the past, Tamāchu has been wishing for such a chance to test his courage and physical

endurance. Now that he has proven his ability to stand upto a ferocious adversary, Tamāchu declares that what remains next is to face the real challenge on the battlefield for the cause of his country. But the incident also brings to him the realization of how lonely he is. He tells himself that if he had had a wife, she would have hailed his bravery with joyous ululation and reacted to his wounds with a wail of sympathy. If he had had children they would have been at his side to give him help when he needed it. These monologues are anticipatory signals preparing the reader for the next development in the plot.

The hunting incident marks a turning point in the story, for the hero soon marries Segēradā, who eventually bears him a daughter and three sons. Apart from demonstrating his bravery, the incident also reinforces what is suggested by his particular interest in stories of battles and acts of heroism. The narrator describes the fight with the leopard as "a struggle on the battlefield" (p.281). The hero regards it as a prelude to his future fight for the cause of his country. The reader can infer from these repeated signals the imminence of a war in which the protagonist would participate. This suggestion is further reinforced by Tamāchu's constantly reminding his two elder sons that the most honorable achievement in one's life is self-sacrifice for the well-being of one's country. After the reader has been prepared through such signals, Āschanāqi, Tamāchu's friend from Addis Ababa, breaks the news of the mobilization of the people for the war against the Italian invaders. Quite in keeping with his patriotic temperament, Tamāchu takes his two elder sons[5] with him and joins the Ilubābor contingent, which is commanded by his kinsman Hāyla Māryām Tāsē.

The focus of the story remains fixed on Tamāchu during the military parade in Addis Ababa. At first, Tamāchu and his sons stand by the roadside and wait for the arrival of their contingent. While doing so, Tamāchu hears the war drums beating the signal "gabber! gabber! gabber!" (submit! submit! submit!) at the head of the marching soldiers from Ilubabor. The solfiers are dressed in "soot-

like" khaki uniforms and emerge into view "like a flash-flood". The scene arouses Tamāchu's patriotic fervour and he chants the traditional war song. Then there comes into view Hāyla Māryām himself, mounted on a black horse with a white forehead and waving to his soldiers to move on. He, too, is dressed in a khaki uniform, with two ammunition belts draped from waist to shoulder and an embroidered lion's skin on top of this. He has two spears in his left hand. He wore his hair in the gofarē style. The man has such an imposing bearing that the sight of him elevates Tamāchu's fighting spirit even further. Congratulating himself for being lucky enough to fight under such a commander, Tamāchu joins in the march. Unlike Ār'āyā in the previous novel, Tamāchu here becomes a vital part of the event __ he marches, he chants, he dances, he watches, and he weeps. Since the reader's attention will not be divided between Tamāchu and the scenes around him, this facilitates emotional identification with the hero.

After the parade and the royal banquet, Tamāchu's contingent moves to Jijigā, where it stays for over two months. At this stage the focus turns to the whole force of the southern front and their commanders who wrangle over some logistical problems. This part of the story seems overburdened with digressive factual details which have little bearing on the subsequent development of the action. But when the fighting starts, the focus shifts to Tamāchu. With his two sons at his side, he defends his position courageously and at one point forces the enemy to retreat. As he pursues the fleeing soldiers, he confronts their commanding officer and hews off his shoulder with one stroke of his sword. The Italians who see their officer fall fire back a volley of shots and throw a grenade at Tamāchu. With his arm and leg severely wounded and his face burnt by the blast, Tamāchu collapses. When he comes round, he finds his son mortally wounded in the chest and lying at his feet. Realizing the fulfillment of his long-time desire, Tamāchu recalls his earlier confrontation with the leopard, thereby confirming to the reader that incident's foreshadowing function.

Following the death of his younger son, Tamāchu wanders

alone in the battlefield to search for his elder son. The latter is separated from his father while chasing an enemy soldier. In the course of his search, Tamāchu identifies the bodies of his fallen compatriots and salutes each of them:

> In this way he continued his search, turning over each body that lay face down and checking if it was his son's. Then he saw the body of Qañña̱zmāch Eshatu Tashabaru with the finger still locked onto the trigger of his gun. He raised the head and said: "Eshatu, are you shooting even when you are dead? You are a true lion. Now you can release the trigger and rest on the battlefield. Even if you are dead, your deeds will not die." Then he moved ahead.
>
> (p.306)
>
> ---
>
> While Tamāchu was peering at every corpse like a mad man, he came across Qañña̱zmāch Tā̱sho's body. It was torn into two halves by a grenade. His gun and empty cartridge belt were lying in front of him and the bodies of about a hundred fascist soldiers were lying scattered around him. He said: "Tā̱sho, the true patriot! Your upper half is giving its testimony to your valour .... It is lying on top of your enemy and declaring its victory. My friend, you are not dead. You have become immortal. Goodbye!"
>
> (pp.306-307)
>
> ---
>
> ... then he came across the body of Qañña̱zmāch Ballata̱. It was crushed under a tank, with the liver and intestine spread out on the ground. He said: "Ballata̱, you have indeed excelled [pun on name]. Just as you vowed, you have halted the tank with a stroke of your sword and in turn been ground into dust ...."
>
> (p.307)
>
> ---
>
> ... he then walked further ahead and saw from a distant a vulture craning its neck to tear the flesh

> of a dead soldier lying on top of the body of his enemy. Raising his stick and hobbling towards the vulture, Tamāchu swore at it saying, "You bastard! How dare you eat this brave man before I leave this place?" Hearing Tamāchu's voice, the vulture moved away a little bit and began to wait for its prey.
>
> When Tamāchu raised up the body and looked at it, he realized that it was his son Kendē's. He embraced it and kissed it ... [addressing it similarly. After crying and bidding it farewell,] he said, "Vulture, now you can have him," and moved away.
>
> (p.308)

As the battle does not constitute the climax of the action, his participation in it and his testimony of these moving scenes of death and suffering serve mainly to enhance the irony in later developments. It has been his wish to fall in battle while fighting for his country. But it is his two sons who get this honour. In his war chant during the parade in Addis Ababa, he has pledged to his Emperor to sacrifice at least as much as "the blood of a chicken for washing away the insult of the brazen enemy" (p.294). And true to his word he has paid no less than that. But he has also shot dead his own comrade whose limbs were shattered by a grenade attack and who begged him to finish him off before the vultures ate him alive. The guilt of his act, the loss of his sons, and the harrowing scenes he has witnessed make him wish for death. However, he loses the courage to take his own life and so, hoping to be eaten by the beasts or to be murdered by marauding Somalis, he treks to Dagā Hāmado, feeding only on wild berries. There, he meets a man called Feqru who offers him food and shelter and nurses him for six months. When he fully recovers from his wounds, Tamāchu's hope to see his wife and children revives and so he travels to Dabra Berhān. The battle fulfills two important conditions that facilitate later developments: the death of his two sons, and the transformation of Tamāchu's physical features. He has lost the

sight of one eye. The burn has also completely disfigured his face by darkening and scarring it as if it were ravaged by a strange skin disease. Furthermore, the wound has crippled his leg. Dressed in tatters and limping as he walks, his condition sufficiently disguises his identity, thereby enabling him to successfully pose later as a beggar.

But before he reaches his destination, more signals are provided to prepare the reader for the subsequent developments. When taking leave of Feqru, Tamāchu tells him that the only thing that could recompense his suffering and sorrow now is his reunion with his family. To this, Feqru replies by pointing out that the loss of national sovereignty brings with it the ruin of the family and the abuse of human rights. Undeterred by this Tamāchu starts his long journey home via Hārar, Bishoftu, and Addis Ababa (with the short stops at these places used for accommodating some of the post-invasion scenes). In Sandāfā, he runs into a patriot who asks him his business. Tamāchu identifies himself as a beggar and gives as his address a place in the neighborhood of his home in Dabra Berhān. The patriot recognizes the address as he happens to know Tamāchu's home. Encouraged by this Tamāchu invents for himself the name "Gud Āla Shawā" (meaning "Amazing-Said-Shawā" __ a further signal to the ironic turn of events) and inquires about the well-being of Tamāchu and his family. The other replies that Tamāchu and his two sons have been killed in the war and that sorrow has befallen his family. Also impressed by the beggar's overconcern for the "widow", he assures him that as the woman is attractive, she could easily get married to alleviate her children's hardship. But the "beggar" insists that she loved her husband too deeply to think of another marriage. The patriot brushes this aside and invites him instead to serve his country by spying for them while begging for food from house to house. This incident also reinforces Feqru's warning by suggesting an undesireable change in the conditions of the protagonist's family. But because Tamāchu is strongly optimistic about his reunion, the descrepancy between his optimism and the reservations of these two people tends to make the reader to anxiously look forward to the outcome.

As Tamāchu has already assumed a new name and identity, the incident also naturalizes his family's inability to recognize him rightaway.

Soon he reaches his home and finds the house renovated with a new paint and a further extension added to it. He also sees a "thoroughbred horse saddled with a faranj harness" standing in the compound. Curious to know about these changes, Tamāchu draws the attention of the occupants of the house by begging for alms. His daughter, Tawābach, comes out and sees "a wretched and ill-looking man"(p.321) at the gate and reports this to her mother. Segēradā gives her an Italian "soldi" to offer it to the "beggar". Seeing the impression of King Victor Emmanuel's face on the coin, Tamāchu throws it away and begs her to give him some food, a bag to hold it in, and a piece of rope to tie the bag with. When she brings him these, he draws her into a conversation from which he learns how an Italian officer, Brigadier Mario, occupied the house and then forced Ṣegerada to be his wife. The anticipatory signals in the statements of the patriot and Feqru are thus validated.

In connection with the location of Tamāchu's house, there is one landmark which both the narrator and the hero repeatedly cite __ the big tree nearby. Just as the stick which Tamāchu earlier gives to his son has a role in the plot (it is later used by Tamāchu as a crutch both for support and disguise), this big tree, too, has a function in the plot. After the encounter with his daughter, it is this tree that Tamāchu uses as a shelter for the night. Its proximity to the house enables him to watch from there the evening party held at his home. When he goes to the gate Mario spots him from inside and inquires about him. When Tawābach comes to find out who the intruder is, he tells her that he is the same beggar and is now watching this "jubilation and merriment" (p.328). On being told this, Mario orders her to give the man a glass of wine and to destroy the glass so that his disease would not contaminate others. Tamāchu accepts the wine saying, "Let me drink the toast to my death" (p.329) and drains the glass at one gulp. When his daughter smashes the glass in front of him, he sadly looks at the broken pieces and says, "I am now

as worthless as this broken glass.... I am now a dead man" (p.329). These ominous statements signal his tragic fate. At dawn, when "the sky looked like blood" (p.330), he writes a suicide note addressed to his wife and hangs himself on the same big tree, with the rope that his daughter has given him.

In the morning, When Segēradā as usual goes to church to pray for her husband and two sons, she notices the body hanged on the branch of the nearby tree. She walks towards it and dicovers a note tied to the man's leg. To her shock, she realizes that it was her beloved husband who had hanged himself there. Earlier during his journey home, Tamāchu has seen an Italian officer supervising the decapitation of an Ethiopian. At that time Tamāchu's prayer was for revenge so that the Italians would pay measure for measure. And his prayer is now answered, for his wife rushes back to her home, picks up an axe and deals the unsuspecting Mario such a blow that his head is sliced off and rolls on to the floor. Maddened by the suffering and humiliation of her husband and her feeling of guilt, she runs to the centre of the town brandishing her blood-stained axe. When a large crowd gathers around her, she tells them the story of her husband and herself and calls on the people to follow her example and rise against the enemy. But soon the carabinieri arrive, disperse the crowd, and take her to the governor for interrogation. As she defiantly admits killing Mario, they hang her on the same tree, by the side of her husband. Tamāchu has predicted that his death would trigger the storm of resistance and so it does, for the story ends with the report that thousands of people took to arms soon after this tragic incident.

While the plot is more cohesively structured than that in the novels of Heruy and Germāchaw, it is slightly marred by some improbable elements. In his preliminary exposition, for instance, the narrator gives the age of the hero at the start of the story (1884 E.C.) as twenty five years. At the time of the mobilization for the war (1928 E.C.), however, Tamāchu is reported to be forty years old. As Feqrē Tolosā rightly points out (pp.100-101), Tamāchu would at this time be an elderly man of sixty

nine years and too old to endure all that pain and hardship during and after the battle in the south. Not only this, his daughter would also be a grown up woman of thirty years and his youngest son (who childishly asks him to bring him sugar from the battlefield) would be twenty eight years.

Tamāchu first hears about the news of the mobilization from Āschanāqi, who comes from Addis Ababa for the sole purpose of relaying to him this information. This man reports that many fighters have left for the war fronts and that those drawn from Ilubābor have reached Āddis Ālam. What makes this situation improbable is why the national mobilization has not affected Dabra Berhān, a town closer to Addis Ababa than is Wallagā or Ilubābor. Perhaps Makonnen wanted to make his hero fight with the contingent from Ilubābor, which he actually commanded and to whom he says he recounted the original version of this story.[6] So, it seems that he kept silent about the local mobilization rather than create a plausible reason for the hero's choice of a distant contingent. The story hence lacks adequate justification for the hero's ignorance of the mobilization until this time, especially in view of his particular interest in accounts of war and his motivation for sacrifice. Apart from this it is also somewhat abnormal that a guest who comes from as far away as Addis Ababa (after travelling for two days) should hastily depart without even greeting the lady of the house, let alone be uninvited to stay at least for coffee.

Tamāchu's tour of Addis Ababa after the battle is also presented unconvicingly. A day after the Graziani massacre, he meets an eye-witness in Bishoftu and learns from him the atrocities committed by the fascists. The man warns him of the danger of easily getting killed or thrown into a concentration camp. A day or two later, Tamāchu enters the capital and freely wanders in places that are packed with tanks and other military vehicles. He even enters the palace compound unhindered, thus undermining the validity of the man's report about the brutality of the Italians in the city.

The ending of the story, too, seems to be a little

contrived. Before committing suicide, Tamāchu says in his prayer: "As I believe that it would ignite the smouldering fire and arouse the people if I reveal my identity and hang myself on this tree, I have decided to take my own life" (p.331). Later, the narrator reports that on the night of the execution of the protagonist's wife , "thousands of young men in the town of Dabra Berhān became patriots" (p.332). He even resorts to Āfawarq's hyperbolic method when he concludes the story by saying:

> Holding the blood-stained axe, because Segēradā screamed, "Ooo! Ooo! Ooo! Heroes of my country, raise your arms against your enemy," the smouldering fire was ignited from east to west and from north to south.
>
> (p.338)

II

Despite such improbabilities, its symbolism and effects of irony can earn the work a better place than Gérard's "abysses of triteness". The first manifestation of irony is in a verbal form __ the title itself. It is a cry of utter humiliation by the hero who regards himself as the living-dead when he sees his wife and home taken up by his enemy. When he first sees his renovated house, he says, "My house has been beautified while I have been mangled" (p.321). Most of the ironies, however, are situational. Hence their application could not be fully realized without taking into account Tamāchu's sacrifices at the war front. Here are some examples of the situational ironies:

1/ After Tamāchu recovers from his injuries, he buys a third class ticket and boards the train to Addis Ababa. But because his clothes are in tatters and his face is disfigured by the burn, some of the passengers regard him with utter contempt and denounce the train conductors for allowing "this leper" to travel with them. Others say:"His arm and leg must have been crippled while he was fighting against Mussolini, the light of Ethiopia. He deserves to be taken off the train and abandoned in the desert " (pp. 313-314). Some voice their sympathy for Tamāchu, who, offended

by the hostility of his countrymen for whose well-being he has shed his blood and lost his sons, abandons the train before reaching his destination. He continues the rest of his journey on foot.

2/ When Tamāchu reaches his home, he begs for food, but the alms he is offered is an Italian "soldi". He rejects this and begs her to give him a piece of rope __ the means of his death __ and his daughter cuts a piece from the rope that Mario brought home.

3/ The same night a party is held in Tamāchu's house. Standing at the gate he watches his wife dancing with Mario. And to add to the irony, the Italian sends him a glass of wine so that he may "share" their joy.

4/ The next day Segēradā discovers the fate of her husband and rushes home to avenge him. At this time Mario is sipping his morning coffee and skimming through a newspaper. Very soon he has to go out for his appointment with the governor to talk about hunting down the patriots. But his enraged wife finishes him off before this. Thus the very weapon which the Italians have used to hack to death the Ethiopians and hence became the physical symbol of fascism is now turned against them. And figuratively speaking, the man who has been preparing to hunt down the patriots is himself hunted down to his very home __ by the corpse of a patriot, too!

Tamāchu makes repeated allusions to the Biblical example of the grain of wheat that falls on the ground and "dies", only to resurrect again with its number increased many fold. When Tamāchu first meets his kinsman Hāyla Māryām, the latter notices the two sons and asks him why he has not spared at least his younger son as a "seed". Tamāchu replies: "My lord, isn't it when the land is available that one needs to save his seed? When an enemy that grabs the land comes, it is better to take your seed and sow it on the battlefield" (p.291). After the battle is fought and both he and his younger son are wounded, Tamāchu consoles him by drawing an analogy between the grain of wheat and the fallen warriors:

> ... be courageous my son. Unless we suffer from hunger, thirst and wounds and sacrifice ourselves

> for our country, its mountains, water, and all its natural wealth will not pass over to the next generation. It has been said that unless a grain of wheat falls on the ground and decays, it will not give more yield. My beloved son, isn't it this grain which has been sown on the battlefield that produces freedom?
>
> (p.304)

When Tamāchu commits suicide, he takes himself as such a productive grain. It is worth noting that the timing of his death itself has a symbolic significance: it is at dawn, when "the sky looked like blood". And dawn is very often associated with the herald of freedom. The symbolic implication of the depiction is that by shedding their blood like Tamāchu, the patriots can bring freedom to millions of their countrymen.

There are also other symbolisms apart from the above. Tamāchu regards the wine that Mario sends him as a toast to his death. When his daughter smashes the glass, he draws an analogy between himself and the broken glass. In the evening he abruptly wakes up from his dream when the smashing of the glass bangs on his ears "like a gun fire". Right then he sees Mario and Segēradā, together with their Italian guests, shooting fire-crackers and cheerfully chattering. Tamāchu then says to himself: "The reminders of my death are increasing; the time has come for breaking the glass of my life" (p.330). The glass that is degraded and condemned to destruction, therefore, turns into a symbol of himself.

Makonnen has a saying that "a book of fiction is honey for sweetening the bitterness of the world."[7] In the Preface of this novel, he points out that it is essential to write "sweet fictional stories so as to keep away the thousand birds of worry from the mind and enable people to read their books with full concentration right to the end" (p.277). It is his belief that many other writers have done this by "selecting those moving situations and composing narratives that touch the heart" (p.277). This belief can partly explain why his works are often pervaded by pathos. Apart from the repeated use of pathetic scenes, there is a marked

tendency to resort to commonplaces and cliches loaded with sentimental overtones. Although it is difficult to show this in a translated version, a rough idea can be gathered from the following examples of such descriptions. (The underlinings are mine.)

1/ Tamāchu announces to his wife his decision to go to the war front. "With her tears streaming down her face like flood" (p.287), she throws herself at his feet and beseeches him not to go. As he refuses to change his mind she retires to her kitchen, weeping all the time. When the time for his departure arrives, he, too, weeps like her.

2/ During the military parade, he noties that some people in the crowd of spectators are weeping while many are cheering the soldiers with ululations. This mixed reception reminds him of the "bitter cry" of his own wife and suddenly "burning tears" fill his eyes (p.293).

3/ On his way home after the battle, he sees the fascists executing an Ethiopian. The victim is made to bow over a piece of log and his hands are tied. Then someone chops off his head with an axe. "When the blood of the Ethiopian slaughtered like a sheep flowed like flood, a fascist soldier collected it in a metal container. As this incident exceeded in its brutality all the intense suffering he had witnessed before, Tamāchu cried bitterly" and quickly resumed his journey (p.312).

4/ In Bishoftu Tamāchu meets a fugitive who tells him how the Italians tried to avenge the attempt on the life of Graziani by indiscriminately hacking to death men, women, and children and throwing them into the streets like dead dogs. "But," says the man,

> there was one incident which saddened me most of all. While the fascists were setting fire to a house, a terror-stricken child ran out towards a fascist officer calling him "father! father!" Another officer then thrust the bayonet of his gun into her belly, lifted her up with it and tossed her into the fire. When I saw this, my blood boiled and I was driven crazy with anguish. In the midst of the confusion I plunged my knife into the chest of

that inhuman fascist and escaped under the cover of darkness.

(pp.314-315)

5/ Tamāchu reaches home and begs for alms. His daughter then reports to her mother that "whenever he looked at me, his tears flowed like water" and that she has never met such a pitiable man who touched her heart (p.322). Again, when reporting to Tamāchu how her mother came to marry Mario, she says, "whenever I think of it, it makes me cry. After hearing news of the death of her husband and sons, Segēradā led a miserable life of sorrow for eight months. [Recalling the scene of his departure] she says, 'I can see you through the mist of my tears as you headed towards the path of death....' Her constant preoccupation at home since then is crying and lamenting...." (p.329).

6/ On the same evening, Tamachu "weeps bitterly" and lies at the foot of the big tree in "a sleep of sorrow". When the sound of music wakes him up, he walks to the gate and watches his wife dancing with Mario. "Holding his head with both hands, he wept and said to himself, 'I wish I had fallen on the battlefield like like my sons and been eaten by vultures rather than undergo such misery'" (p.328). When he commits suicide and his wife reads the "sad" note, the narrator says, "It is difficult to describe in writing the sorrow that Segēradā felt at that time" (p.332).

As can be gathered from the above outline the rendition of emotional scenes makes heavy use of hackneyed expressions in which "tears", "sorrow", "misery", "bitterness", "blood", and "death" are the staple vocabulary. After the chapter dealing with the battle in the south, there is hardly a page in which one or the other of the characters does not shed tears or feel anguish. While a major problem with the novels of Heruy and Germāchaw is their inability to arouse or sustain the reader's emotion, the drawback in this novel is its overindulgence in sentimentalism.

III

The protagonists in this novel are essentially illustrative and like the protagonists in Āfawarq's novel advance the theme through their actions and through what happens to them rather than primarily through their speeches or thoughts. But there are some minor characters who, even within the bounds of their illustrative role, are not convincing enough. Although Tawābach, for instance, is less than six years old, she argues with her father rather like an adult. After Tamāchu returnes from the battlefield, he says to her that her father would be astounded if he were to witness "all this wonder". To this she replies that as he has died, it is impossible for his soul to see the changes. When Tamāchu insists that her father's soul could indeed come to visit his home, she answers:

> God forbid that! When father's home is occupied by his enemy and mother is forced to marry this enemy, when I am compelled to serve as the housemaid of my father's murderer and Āshaber is made to join the fascists' school so that he would learn to abandon his people, if father's soul were to visit us, it would very much be aggrieved.
>
> (p.329)

And yet the girl who argues like this is the same one who, a little while ago, angrily rebukes Tamāchu by saying: "When I give you alms, why do you throw away the money that bears the facial impression of the generous and famous Victor Emmanuel?" (p.322) She sounds even less convincing when she rationalizes about her mother's forced marriage by quoting the saying "A she-buffalo charges primarily to protect her offspring" (p.325). The same saying is earlier quoted by the patriot who hints at the likelihood of Segēradā's marrying for the sake of her children.

Although the authorial narrator does not bore the reader with sermonizing and isolated commentaries, he does not refrain from overtly expressing his value judgements. When Tamāchu requests his relatives to find him a wife, he says:

"Āto Tamāchu was kind-hearted and lucky, too, for his relatives deliberated over the matter and selected for him Segēradā, a beautiful and good-natured girl whose father was a respectable man" (p.283). But even such a complementary comment appears less frequently than is the case in Ār'āyā.

There are few descriptions of interiors and landscape in this novel. Descriptions of the physical features of the characters are generally schematic and not frequent. The one vivid description of physical appearance is that of the commander, Hāyla Māryām Tāsē. This one seems to have been necessitated by the need to show that the man is worthy of Tamāchu's choice to fight under him. When Tamāchu himself is described at the battlefield, the details used are the kind that would produce more of an emotional impact than create a vivid image: "... standing in the midst of all those corpses, with his arm and leg wounded, his face burnt black, ... his body smeared with blood, his clothes torn into shreds, ... and a stick held in his hand, Āto Tamāchu looked a pathetic sight to see" (p.305). When Segēradā is first introduced to the reader, all that we are told about her physical features is that she has an attractive light-brown complexion. But at the time of her realization of who the hanged man is, the narrator says:

> It is very difficult to describe in writing the sorrow that Segēradā felt at that moment. With her eyes turned white, her face as pale as a marble statue, and tears dry on it, she looked like a corpse.
>
> As she was gripped by real hard grief, she didn't know what to think of. Like a crazy person, after laughing, shivering, pulling her hair and trying to weep, she coiled herself around the body and said, "My dear, did you receive alms at your own home? ...
>
> (p.332)

Makonnen's method of presenting dialogue is similar to the method used in his plays. The speeches are brief

and the speaker's name is given at the beginning of his speech. Occasionally the narrator interrupts it to report something briefly, but this tends to make the flow of the dialogue somewhat jerky. Formal addresses such "O my sons", "My dear" and the likes are often used by the main protagonist even when the situation is informal. Generally, the speeches are set off from each other and from the narrator's report by new paragraphs rather than by using quotation marks. Still, unlike the case in Hāddis Ālam and Ār'āyā, there is here little attempt to use dialogues as vehicles for the transmission of practical information as such.

Notes and References

1. "Ras Bitwoded Mekonnen Endalkachew: Life and Works", Menen, 10, no.4 (1966) (18-20), p.19.

2. Ārremuñ (Addis Ababa, 1960 E.C.), p.46.

3. "Ācher Ya-Ityopyā Sena Ṣehuf Tārik", (unpublished; Addis Ababa, 1976 E.C.), p.160.

4. "From Tradition to Modern Literature in Ethiopia", Zeitschrift für Kulturaustausch (1973) (81-83), pp.81-82.

5. Note that the names of the sons are suggestive of their roles. His first son is called "Kendē" (My-Arm). His second son is called "Gāshāw Bazzā"(His-Shields-Increased). The significance of the names becomes apparent when he tells his sons before leaving for the war front: "Kendē, I shall not now struggle alone with my enemy as I did with the leopard. If I fall, you will raise me up; if you fall, I will do the same" (p.288). "My son Gāshāw Bazzā, as you shouldn't be merely the bearer of a name, defend you country with your shield" (p.288).

6. Ārremuñ, pp.359-360.

7. On the front cover and title-page of Ārremuñ.

Chapter Five

SĒTEÑÑĀ ĀDĀRI

I

The works that have been dicussed in the previous chapters share the same type of narrator: the omniscient authorial narrator conventionally referred to as the "third person" narrator. But as Gérard Genette points out, "insofar as the narrator can at any instant intervene as such in the narrative, every narrating is, by definition, to all intents and purposes presented in the first person (even if in the editorial plural, as when Stendhal writes 'we will confess that ... we have begun the story of our hero ...')."[1] Likewise, Āfawarq's narrator twice abandons his restraint of overt self-reference and says, "that tent which we said was magnificent" (p.55) and "as I said a moment ago..." (p.68). In Ār'āyā, too, the narrator frequently refers to himself in the first person : "... in the manner customary in our country" (p.216); "since there were not suffieient men on our side" (p.251); "as we pointed out above" (p.275). Despite their explicit self-references, these narrators are not part of the fictional world they present. This is one basic factor which distinguishes them from the narrator in Nagāsh's novel.

The story is here told by the central character who makes her living as a prostitute. Unlike many narrating characters in other Amharic novels, this one explicitly indicates her motivation for telling the story. She says that her intention in writing her "autobiography" is to show what kind of life prostitutes lead and by so doing to discourage young women from dropping out of school or breaking their marriages to become prostitutes. What is interesting, however, is neither the disclosure of her motivation for narrating nor the didactic nature of this motivation. The narrator in Ābbē Gubañña's Ya-āmas Nuzāzē (1955 E.C.) is also didactically motivated in presenting his "confessional" story. What is unconventional in her case

is that she takes up the real author's place in the Preface and on the title-page of the book. It is she who makes the customary acknowledgement to the people who helped in the publication of the book. She keeps their names anonymous presumably for fear that the association of their names with a prostitute might tarnish their reputation. But she doesn't give her own real name either. She says she is using the pseudonym "Ennānu Āggonāfer" firstly because she wants her "autobiography" to be the collective message of all prostitutes, and, secondly, because she doesn't want to be an object of ridicule and rumour-mongering. Despite the implication of such strategies for enhancing the plausibility of the story, its fictionality is affirmed by the appearance of the label "novel" on the same title-page bearing the pseudonym of the narrator (or rather of the real author).

As the story purports to be an autobiography, its plot does not raise, develop, and resolve any specific central conflict as such. It follows more or less chronologically many of the stereotype patterns in the life of a prostitute: childhood in a rural area, a broken marriage, migration to a city, a brief period of honeymoon mainly in the early phase of prostitution, contamination by venereal disease, begetting an illegitimate child, and utter destitution or death — a pattern which was first set by Āsaffā Gabra Māryām's novel, Enda Waṭṭāch Qarrach (1941 E.C.). Ennānu's life does not greatly vary from this pattern, except that it does not come to a tragic end when the story closes (as is the case in the former novel and in Berhānu Zarihun's Hulat Ya-enbā Dabdābbēwoch, 1955 E.C.).

Ennānu begins writing about her life some fifteen years after she comes to Addis Ababa. The story is hence told with a wide temporal gap between the moment of experiencing and the moment of narrating. This gap does not appear to be adequately exploited for sharply projecting the psychological contrast between the experiencing self and the narrating self[2] at least upto the point where she begins discussing with her customers the means of eradicating prostitution. The overriding didactic motivation for telling the story seems to have effected the ecclipsing

of the image of the experiencing self by that of the narrating self. Consequently, the narrator resorts to summaries in presenting her life prior to her coming to Addis Ababa:

> The reader will find nothing extraordinary in an account about my youth. Nor is the account of my present life one of fame and glory. But, as there are many women who share the kind of history that I have, I believe that pooling together accounts of non-entities like us could highlight the significance of this problem and contribute to the search for solutions.
>
> Let me return to the account of my early life. I was born in Gojjām and brought up in Dasē. I was married to my first husband at the age of twelve years and lived with him for three years. We had no children. While it was my parents who gave me to my first husband, it was an Italian lorry slowly dragging itself from Dasē to Addis Ababa which married me to my second husband.
>
> (p.8)

Not much is revealed about her early life later in the story except that she has been a third-grade student before coming to Addis Ababa and that she has had to divorce her first husband because she couldn't stand his jealousy and beatings any longer. Unlike the case in Hulat Ya-enbā Dabdābbēwoch, a vital phase in the metamorphosis of a married woman into a prostitute goes without being vividly dramatized. The treatment of her second marriage, however, is slightly expanded as the account about it is interspersed with with bits of scenic detail:

> I remember that the month was July. It was raining heavily. out of the ten people sitting on top of the lorry's load and being soaked by the rain, there were only two women __ myself and an elderly woman. A bald-headed middle-aged passenger moved closer to me and asked me first my name , then my

life-history and whether I had been to Addis Ababa before. Being naive and having nothing to hide at that time, I told him everything in my heart. I informed him about my birth in Gojjām and my childhood in Dasē, about my divorce and my plan to live with my aunt in Addis Ababa.

"I have not seen Addis Ababa before. I still have to find out where my aunt lives," I said. When he heard this his teeth gleamed. I noticed that one tooth was broken.

He consoled me a little bit by saying, "I was born and brought up in Addis Ababa. Don't worry; I will find your aunt for you." After two days of travel in the rain and fog, we reached Addis Ababa. I took with me the old blanket and the sack of clothes I was carrying and settled down in the man's house. Induced by his constant promises to take me to my aunt's place, I lived with him for two and a half years.

(pp.8-9)

The narrator provides only an abridged recollection of even her life with this man. Her report is minimally enlivened with a few snippets of dialogue and description. What little effort she makes to distance her older self from her younger self can be noticed in her attitude to her past self when she says, "being naive and having nothing to hide at that time...." There is a note of regret in this statement which also implies that, unlike then, she is now too critical of others to divulge to them about her private life.

Her life with this man appears to be uneventful. She also says very little about her emotional relationship with him:

I used to regard muself sometimes as a wife and sometimes as a housemaid. But the man I was living with was generous and open-hearted. Besides, being still a stranger in this city, I feared I might be in a worse situation if I left him. So, at

no time did I ask him whether I was his wife or his housemaid.

Through time, I was able to find out that the man was a government employee and earned a monthly salary of a hundred and fifty berr. He budgeted fifty berr for household expenses and forty berr for ṭajj and cigarettes.

When he was drunk he would ask me to wash his feet. I would then feel that I was a servant. When he occasionally came home without getting drunk, he would say, "Women should be liberated and respected." He would also praise my cooking.

"Your enjarā, waṭ, and ṭallā are good. You are also beautiful, though you look naive outwardly. But I must be too old for you, don't you think so?" he would say. I would smile silently, feeling wifely.

If I said to him, "I want to go to school in my spare time like my neighbours," he would knit his brows and reply, "Hussy of a student! Is it to look for youngsters?"

If I returned from the market place a little late, he would retort sarcastically, "Haven't you found your aunt today, too?"

(pp.9-10)

At one stage, however, he comes home drunk as usual and picks a quarrel with her. He beats her and drives her out of his house. She is thus once again on her own and her life enters a new phase when she becomes a bar maid. This first chapter closes with the point of view of the experiencing self asserting itself in the narrator's ironic statement: "I became lucky and found a job as a waitress in a ṭajj bar, with a monthly salary of ten berr in addition to food and lodging" (p.11).

Before she starts her new work in the bar, the owner gives her a briefing about her duties: making coffee, serving ṭajj, and inducing customers to spend a lot of money in the bar. As the last task also involves acting smartly, the owner advises her that to make money very easily, she needs to sexually gratify the customers. But

it is not witout apprehension that the protagonist engages in her double role as bar maid and as prostitute. The rendition of this phase of her life is such that the perspective of the experiencing self is more prominently asserted (as in the rhetorical questions repeatedly posed):

> When I started my new life my heart was disturbed with anxiety. The owner, Wayzaro Bāyyush Āydangetu, was old and rather plump. But the customers who called her "Mammy!" and flirted with her could in no way be her match. Don't dignity and business go together?
>
> After working a bit, every part of me became tajj. My stomach was filled with tajj. My clothes were smeared with tajj. My body smelt of tajj. The tajj addict would come early in the morning and order: "Tajjē! [My tajj] serve me some tajj, please." Is the name my parents gave me also changing to tajj?
>
> (pp.13-14)

After working for some time at the bar, she contracts syphilis. Although she is soon treated and becomes well, envious colleagues deliberately spread the news around so as to take away her clients. When the latter stop visiting her, she moves to the red-light district of Wubē Barahā, where she is employed in a fashionable bar that sells liquors such as gin and whisky. This time, as she presents her reactions on the first day of her work scenically, the contrast between the experiencing self and the older narrating self becomes easily noticeable:

> I started my work as a waitress at the beginning of the month. The number of young men coming to our bar in one evening was about the same as the total that visited the tajj bar in Markāto in a whole week.
>
> As one could get lessons by seeing and listening, I put on my [traditional] dress and sat in a darker corner to observe the manners of

the men and women.

On the day I started work, the first young man that barged into the bar began calling out the names of every member of the staff, from the boss herself right down to the servant, and flirtingly teasing one, slapping another and kicking a third. While I was thus observing his misconduct, he turned to me saying, "Where has this one come from?" and sat down by my side.

"She is new," answered Sophia.

"New? That means she is fresh!" he said, grinning and opening his eyes widely. Noticing him squirming, Hanna said, "Don't miss her!" He put his tie in order and commanded in a dignified tone, "Serve her a drink."

Hanna came closer and asked me sarcastically, "What would you take, Madam?" After pondering for a little while I blurted out "whisky with ṭajj" instead of saying "whisky with soda". My order made me an object of laughter for a whole month.

The music was turned on loud. The man who invited me leapt out of his seat and said to me, "Let us dance this 'twist'". I was wrapped in my naṭalā and sitting in a corner with my back against the wall. I swore to him that I had no skill in dancing. He insisted that I should learn now and pulled me up from my seat. In the midst of my confusion, while I was making erratic movements, I stepped on the man's foot.He abandoned me in the middle of the room and sped to his seat screaming, "She has broken my leg!" Cruel peals of laughter filled the room, but Hanna's pretentious laugh could be heard above that of the crowd of customers.

I still have not understood why I had been laughed at for not knowing how to dance. But I felt that in the face of drinks, vanity and malice, there could be no compassion and understanding. So I had to join in the laughter.

At half past twelve, I found out why Hanna's

laugh was the loudest of all. Each customer was pairing with a waitress and whispering. One heard occasionally an annoyed customer suddenly raising his voice and saying, "Isn't ten berr enough for you?"

The man who invited me had been discouraging other customers interested in me by inviting some of them and by scowling at the others. "It is time for us to go," he said and began to pull me by the arm. I promised to join him soon and went to the inner room. Hanna followed me.

"What is the man saying to you?" she asked in an edgy tome.

"He is asking me to pass the night with him," I replied.

She shook her head and said, "Don't be mistaken!"

"What do you mean, I don't understand you," I said.

"He is my lover!" she replied.

"Oh, I am sorry!" Isaid in shock.

"Let me explain to you the custom in this house," she began to blabber in a voice that betrayed her jealousy. The point she was impressing upon me was that as one woman must not take away another's client, they have to first check before I go out with one. After some time I was able to realize that all this didn't work.

"He has invited me to drinks . Wouldn't he get angry with me now?" I asked, hoping that she would suggest some way out.

"Of course, that is inevitable. But why don't you hide in the kitchen?" she offered me her usual trick.

And I did as I was advised. The young man caused much disturbance and didn't even pay the bill when he was finally evicted by the police. I became uneasy because I had earned myself an enemy right on the first day. I wouldn't have offended him if it had not been for these deceitful women who forced me to hide away from him .... I was

> distressed at causing the boss so much inconvenience on my first day of work. I was also worried that if what Hanna said was true, I would be unable to get a client, especially as every regular customer seemed to be on intimate terms with all the ten women, including the owner and the servant.
>
> (pp.25-28)

The psychological distance between the experiencing self and the narrating self markedly diminishes after the fourth chapter. By this time, she has worked as a waitress and prostitute in the red-light district for four years and her new life has lost its glamour for her. She has acquired the essential tricks of the trade and her experiences have broadened in scope. With the increase in her hardship following the death of her lover and her son by him, her disillusionment with her style of life grows and the value schemes of the two selves become indistinguishable.

II

When life in the red-light district of Wubē Barahā becomes monotonous to her, the narration, too, begins to assume a more intellectualized air. As the narrator often resorts to genralizations about prostitutes and their clients, the focus of the narration tends to lean outwardly, away from her towards the profession itself. One feature repeatedly manifested in such reports is classification. Just as she characterizes prostitutes by grouping them in different categories, she also does the same in describing the customers that visit them:

> There are two types of customers who spend money lavishly. The first type is by nature pretentious. He has limited education but considerable wealth. As he is arrogant in his speech, one needs to be patient with him.
>
> When he orders, "You Gāllā," or "You Gojjāmē! bring whisky," one replies, "Shall I bring half a

bottle or a full one like the other day?" If he carries a lot of money with him, he becomes abusive at the mention of half a bottle. If there isn't much money in his pocket, he says," I am not much keen on whisky today. Make it half a bottle." It is not bad to talk with such a client about ornaments, the house rent, and the coming holiday.

The second type of customer is older and can even be a merchant unsuitable for a lover. A prostitute who pleases him by attending to him smartly, without overtures of a love-relation being made, would be generously rewarded for her effort.

But one needs to be cautious in some cases. Some wealthy old men who take a prostitute to their homes regard this as an honour to her and hesitate to pay her. Some women, too, consider it as indecent to ask elderly clients to pay them in advance, and the next morning they come back empty handed.

But there are also many bold women who wouldn't hesitate to ask for payment in advance. Hanna once told me her experience....

(pp.52-53)

A considerable proportion of the incidents recounted after the fourth chapter are presented as concrete illustrations validating her general observations. What Hanna says about her experience with an old client, for instance, is quoted by the narrator as an illustration of the greedy elderly men and the bold prostitutes that are described in the above report. Such a procedure of presentation tends to undermine the element of spontaneity in the incidents and creates the impression that the account is a sociological survey of prostitution. As the creation of a panoramic picture begins to take precedence, the particularization of experience (Ennānu's life) becomes increasingly subordinated to the collectivization of experience (prostitution in general). Thus she says:

Life itself gives education. Since the nature

of our profession makes us deal with many people, an intelligent prostitute can learn a lot about the psychology of men. Some of them use obscene language, are arrogant in behavior, and malicious. For illustration, let us consider the manners of a few of the men that we encounter.

It was about eleven o'clock in the evening. The heels of his shoes were worn out and his trousers had patches from behind. He was very black, with hairs coiled like wire. As soon as he entered the house, he ordered....

(p.69)

Those who chose prostitution for their livelihood try their best to appear younger and attractive. A prostitute whose beauty is diminished by age or a loss of some teeth or some other disfigurement caused in an accident has little chance of making it up in this competitive market.

I often hear people asking what the fate of an ageing prostitute was. I raised this question to a once-famous prostitute who now makes her living by recounting about her former beauty and exploits in the profession, and by occasionally collecting alms.

I said to her ....

(p.115)

Among those of us who are in the lower class and recognized as prostitutes in our locality, there are some humorous ones who lighten our distresses. Some of these women can sing, crack jokes about their life, and keep themselves and their neighbours in good spirit.

But there is none that excells Āynālam in making jokes, in acting boldly, and in promptly inventing some clever solution for a problem.

(pp.117-118)

One day, she and I were drinking coffee at my place when a man came in and ordered a drink. Then

he turned to us and asked ....

(p.119)

Such a collectivization of experience seems to have been necessitated by the didactic intention to expose all the essential aspects of prostitution so that the solution can take them into acount. Despite such a motivation, the narrator's capacity to laugh at herself and to wittily present all kinds of situations gives vitality to what would otherwise have become a dull narrative. The narrator has a sharp eye for observing seemingly inconsequential details, which she exploits for effects of irony. In the following examples, note how she blends irony with humour:

> After the prayer was over, we walked on the old graves, sadly and apprehensively looking at the graves of the recently buried, carefully treading on the graves covered with filth, and then reached the spot where my son was going to be buried.
>
> O my sins! The grave that was dug by hired coolies seemed to be no more than two cubits in width and depth.
>
> One of the people who had come to the funeral asked a coolie, "Why haven't you dug this grave a little deeper?"
>
> The coolie answered, "The place is rocky. Besides, isn't this deep enough for a small child?" Another person said, "Anyway, can an unbaptized child be buried in a churchyard?" Before this question got an answer, I heard someone say in a lowered voice, "and a prostitute's child at that!"
>
> An elderly man who wanted to deffuse this sudden outburst of doubt and discontent frowned and snapped, "The son of a Christian is a Christian. Let us quickly bury it and leave!"
>
> (pp.101-102)

> I asked her, "What happens to a prostitute When she becomes old?"

"She becomes like me," she answered. She was an old woman who leaned on her crutch and wandered from house to house to beg or pine for food.

"At what age did you stop practising prostitution?" I asked.

"Perhaps at the age of fifty?" she said.

I suppressed my laugh and said, "So you stopped when you had had enough of it!"

"It wasn't me who stopped it. The men deserted me first and then I had no other alternative but to abandon it," she said with some regret.

(p.115)

Most of the scenes in this novel involve few physical actions and are for the most part dialogic. Description in such contexts dwells more on the manners of the speakers than on their physical features. Although nearly all the dialogues occur indoors, interiors are hardly described except in the one case where it is briefly pointed out that the walls inside the homes of prostitutes are decorated simply with their own portraits and the magazine clippings of famous actors and actresses. The main instance on which scenic presentation involves an extensive description of setting is the following one:

When business slumps, we sit and wait. It is dark. It is cold. It is scary. We keep on waiting. It is a long wait. We don't lose hope. Life has to continue, after all.

I am standing near my window. The half-clouded moon is shyly staring at me. Yesterday's star has risen at the same spot today, too. The wind that came after the rain is blowing the papers and leaves from the streets into the ditches on the left and right sides. I can see dogs and cats crossing the street every now and then. The lamp-post that Mammy Trufāt leans against when selling her enjarā is now surrounded by moths. Small moths! Big moths! I have seen these butterfly-like insects yesterday,

too. Today's rain seems to have washed away their wings. They frantically move around the hot electric street-lamp, knock against it and drop down. Are they dying? What do they feed on? Where do they live? How old are they? Their number grows fast and diminishes likewise. I know that one, that big one! ...

The cold wind lashing at my face has a repellent taste and smell. Sometimes I smell the smell of horse dung. Soon it is replaced by the smell of the dregs of tajj. Then there comes the smell of the latrine, followed by the aroma of coffee and the smell of burning incense. Finally, the day-time smell of cheap perfume mingles with body odour and sweeps through the darkness.

I can hear dogs barking further away from our village. Have they seen a hyena? Has a thief walked close by?

While I was thus meditating about the efforts of various creatures, from the tiny insects to humans, to sustain their lives and attain happiness, a noisy car drove to our village shattering the silence that has reigned over it. I immediately closed my window and slowly opened it a fraction wide. The women who heard the noise of the car soon woke up from their sleep and opened their windows.

The driver turned off the engine and called out to me, "You, come over here!"

"It is curfew time; I am afraid of the police," I said.

I saw the man get out of the car, look around and them move fast towards my door.

(pp.109-110)

In the above passage the narrator briefly sums up her condition in the first paragraph: "dark", "cold", "scary" (setting) and "a long wait" (livelihood). Then she vivifies this by using minute details of light, movement, smell, and sound, which cumulatively create a dominant impression of a lonely life in a squalid environment. Her situation

appears as precarious as that of the helpless moths which she seems to regard in analogic terms. She is alone and has nothing to do except wait, just as her colleagues do. So her attention wanders from the moon to the star, from the wind-blown papers to the dogs, from the moths to the repellent smells and then to the far away noise, until the arrival of the long-awaited client. On other occasions, she presents her thoughts from without, in summaries. On this occasion, however, she directly quotes the thoughts fleeting in her mind (which are given in the form of interjections and rhetorical questions) and then sums them up (as in "While I was thus meditating about..."). Such a dipping into the mind of a narrating character is a very tricky matter, for the act of thinking and the act of narrating are done by the same person. Unlike the omniscient narrator who can create the illusion that he is showing the fleeting thoughts in the mind of a character at the time of thinking, the narrating character is not so privileged to expose his own spontaneous thoughts at the same instance. Even the thoughts themselves could be at the preverbal level and may not be so readily available for conscious recall and narration.

In other novels such as Berhānu Zarihun's Ya-badal Feṣāmē (1956 E.C.) and Sisāy Negusu's Guzow (1975 E.C.), for instance, the narrating charaters do not indulge in a detailed description of their physical features. Nor are they described by other characters. The narrators do not seem to regard their appearance as part of the objects of their narration. The narrator in Sēteñña Ādāri, however, seems to be well-aware of the reader's interest in what she looks like. But then she is also in a slightly different situation than these narrators, for she is a woman who has to use her body to make a living. Prostitution being a "career" in which physical charm plays a vital role, she is therefore better-motivated than the others for describing her physical appearance. It is worth noting here that although she introduces her name and background at the beginning of the story, she describes her physical features much later and within the context of showing how physical charm matters in the competition and how she tries to cope with her rivals.

Still, one can sense her uneasiness about such a self-description, as she feels compelled to justify her self-knowledge about her looks:

> There is no doubt that my name will remain anonymous. But in the locality where I now make a living, one can survive only if one looks elegant and competes with the others. Let me, therefore, say a few words in introducing myself so that people can see me with their mind's eye when I recount to them my activities as of today.
>
> From what I have heard my friends say and I have confirmed in my mirror, I am not a perfect beauty. They tell me that I have an attractive complexion. I don't know what that means. I am certainly pretty and slender. I have encountered many men who praise and women who envy my posture — my breasts, my chest, my buttocks, and my legs.
>
> Many are the men who inflate my vanity by saying, "If only her colour were not dark-brown! She has the posture of a faranj! Her shape is like a Coca-Cola bottle!"
>
> Like that of many Ethiopians, my hair is soft like a black silk. My big eyes seem to stand out in my round face like a silver gulelāt [clay crown on top of a thatched-roof]. My eyebrows, which by nature look as if they were pencilled, make my short nose and pretty face more graceful and attractive. Since I never smoke and don't like sweets, my teeth look like white goats descending a hill or like white ducks flocking along a beach.
>
> Laughter being the music of the soul, I enjoy chatting and tittering. But as I am by nature reserved from wild behaviour, I could be regarded as one of those people who occasionally become gloomy. Still as a woman working in a bar cannot catch the eyes of a drunken customer unless she looks elegant, I dress myself in accordance with the fashion of the day. With my protruding breasts pushing out my blouse to the point of bursting,

my Paris-mode skirt tightly fitting me from waist to hips, and my praised legs in high heel shoes, when my whole body throbs sensually, many are the men who hunger for me. That is why I have little reason to blabber coquettishily like the other women.

(pp.33-34)

III

Commenting on this novel, Thomas Kane notes that it is "mercifully free of long-winded moralizing" (p.44). He says that it is "clearly superior to the average Amharic prose story. The dialogue is natural, with none of that tiresome speech-making which mars [Enda Wattāch Qarrach]" (p.61). While this is certainly true, one still wonders if Kane's characterization as "a work which is written more in accord with Western tastes" (p.44) also applies to the unpretentiously didactic commentary in which the narrator enumerates the measures that should be taken to eradicate prostitution.

The characterization in this novel is definitely subtler than is the case in Āsaffā's novel. Still, the plausibility of Ennānu seems to have been slightly undermined by the dilution of her language with such English words as "experience" (pp.5, 8, 56, 84, 123), "social problem" (pp.8, 126, 127, 129), "psychology" (pp.48, 69), "instinct" and "art" (p.86). The repeated use of such foreign words (even if written in Amharic) would have had some justification if it were the case that she uses English so often that she finds it easier to express herself by occasionally borrowing some words, or even that she wants to show off her knowledge of English. Given her background, the level of her education, and her modesty, these reasons would be unlikely to apply to her. One cannot hence help being sceptical when it is reported that a sixth-grader understood well (even with some help by the customers) an English work written for native speakers, and also the significance of the government's Five Year Development Plan (which she says should take into account the problem of prostitution).

Notes and References

1. Narrative Discourse, p.244.

2. The "experiencing self" is the young, relatively inexperienced, heroine who is "engrossed in her existential situation" and who is the subject of the story. The "narrating self" is the heroine (the older and maturer Ennānu with her eighteen years experience of marriage and prostitution) who is now acting as the agent of narration, with the advantage of hind sight on her past. These two selves appear to converge in the eighth chapter (which she opens with the words, "when I write this chapter ...", p.107), but the psychological distinction begins to fade much earlier. For a detailed discussion of a narrating character's two selves, see F. K. Stanzel, A Theory of Narrative, translated by Charlotte Goedshe (Cambridge, 1984).

Chapter Six

YA-TĒWODROS ENBĀ

I

The novels discussed in the previous chapters present the expositional material (i.e., the background information about the characters and the antecedent circumstance/s) in the initial part of the story. Āfawarq's novel starts with a summary that traces the background to the war that leads to the separation of the Dajāzmāch from his family. The novels of Heruy and Germāchaw begin with a report of the marriage of the heroes' parents, the birth of the heroes, and their distinguishing traits. In the novels of Makonnen and Nagāsh, too, the principal characters' backgrounds are briefly reported at the beginning of the story. The primary function of the expositional material being to enhance the reader's understanding of the characters and the issues facing them, its preliminary location plus the concentrated texture of its "factual" content tend to undermine its capacity to stimulate the reader's interest. An alternative method is the use of an 'in medias res' beginning in which the expositional material is delayed and offered later in a distributed, possibly scenic form.Meir Sternberg explains the advantages yielded by this kind of temporal dislocation as follows:

> First of all, the author's chances of securing out attention from the start are considerably improved since we are at once hurled into the heart of the matter -- in most cases, right into a crucial scene. Once the reader's attention has been captured, the work has already gone a long way towards preparing him for the assimilation of exposition. The opening scenes constitute, temporally and spatially, a sort of concrete frame or scaffold into which the reader can fit the expositional material that is to come and thus effectively

integrate it. The construction of this frame, moreover, serves to draw the reader's notice to the existence of various gaps __ small and large, crucial and merely intriguing, isoalted and closely concentrated or interdependent. For as soon as the initially propelled situation and the characters figuring in it have caught his attention, the reader becomes aware __ and this awareness can easily be heightened by a suitable manipulation of gaps __ that he will not understand them fully or at all as long as he lacks certain information about the period preceding the beginning of the sujet. The expositional information that is distributed __ most of it implicitly __ throughout the first scenes is usually too meager and too disconnected to enable the reader to construct satisfactory hypotheses as to how the various expositional gaps, concerning factual antecedent or psychological motive, should be filled in. On the contrary, the very sketchiness of the information thus unfolded renders these gaps even more prominent and proportionately stimulates his curiosity even further. Furthemore, the reader is eager to have this withheld material not only in order to disambiguate and reconstitute the narrative past or even the present state of affairs per se but also to acquire the premises necessary for forming warrantable expections as to the probable developments of the action in the narrative future. If the action proper is intrinsically interesting due to its natural (quasi-mimetically propelled) dynamics, the antecedents can be artificially rendered interesting, in close reference to these developments, through the rhetorical dynamics of displacement, ambiguity, and consequent bi-directional expectation.[1]

To exploit the above kind of advantages offered by temporal dislocation, some Amharic novelists begin their stories with a plunge 'in medias res'. One of these writers

is Berhānu Zarihun, who has been using this method since his first novel Hulat Ya-enbā Dabdābbēwoch. There, the story begins abruptly, with a suspenseful scene in which Sāhlu learns of the elopement of his wife Ābabā. Then, in a shift to the past, the antecedents upto the point of her elopement are chronologically reported, presumably from Sāhlu's point of view. Following this, the focus is fixed on Ābabā and her new lover. In Berhānu's sixth but best novel Ya-Tēwodros Enbā, the story starts with its ending. What both novels share in common, apart from temporal dislocation, is the problem of plausibly establishing the communicator of some of the expositional information.

In the latter novel's preliminary section which is misleadingly entitled "Tewwest"[2] (Reminiscence), the authorial narrator first presents a brief and generalized report about the nation's mixed feelings of relief, sorrow, humiliation, and anxiety following Emperor Tēwodros' tragic death. The focus then turns to two characters: the hermit Āklilu and a young monk who looks after him. The monk breaks the news of the Emperor's death to Āklilu, who has for the last four years been leading a life of seclusion in a cave. Āklilu first makes his regular prayer and then he quietly listens to the monk's account about the rebellion of the people, the Napier expedition, and the death of Tēwodros:

> When the monk finished his account, Āklilu was for some moments lost in thought. His mind turned to the past. He stared at the monk intently as though he was reading something written on him. Then he regretfully shook his half-shredded knotty hair saying, "It was long before Maqdalā that Tēwodros fell." After pondering awhile, he asked, "I was one of those people who pushed him to his downfall.... My son, would you bring me parchment and a bamboo pen? This is one way of atonement," thought Āklilu; "the story must be told." Before this time, he had never told it to anyone.
>
> (p.9; emphasis mine)

According to the above quotation, the narrator of the rest of the story is ostensibly Āklilu. From what is also implied at the end of the novel, his main motivation for "writing" the story is his strong desire for absolution from the guilt of the injustice he has done to Tēwodros. The novel closes with Āklilu confessing his crimes to the Emperor and vainly pleading for forgiveness:"'Forgiveness! Did you say forgiveness?' Tēwodros made a slight movement as if to rise up and then settled back.'The dead are not asked for forgiveness. Tēwodros is dead. Better go and tell them that Tēwodros lived in his dream and died in his dream'" (p.139). When Āklilu finally parts from Tēwodros, it is with a heavy burden of guilt on his conscience and the words "Go and tell them that Tēwodros is dead," ringing in his ears. After four years of penance, when he receives the news of the Emperor's death, he decides to fulfill Tēwodros' last wish by "writing" the story and thus atoning for his own guilt.

However, Berhānu doesn't seem to have realized that ascribing the role of narrator to Āklilu would necessitate the presentation of only those scenes, events, thoughts and feelings which the character could know about or witness personally. Āklilu's limited privilege of access would not enable him to authoritatively report, for instance, the specific details of the arguments that Tēwodros and his wife Tawābach have in their private chamber, or how Gabreyyē and his wife Qonjit spend their time in Qimembi and finally escape to the Emperor's place. Nor would Āklilu have direct access to the private thoughts of the other characters. Furthermore, if he is the one who narrates the story, he would have no logical reason for referring to himself in the third person pronoun or for not presenting the story from his own overall perspective. The actual mode of narration involves the attributes of omniscience and omnipresence whereas the ascription of the narratorial role to Āklilu automatically rules out such privileges of access to information. It is this inconsistency that makes the reader reject Āklilu's role as narrator, just as it is the disparity between Sāhlu's limited knowledge about the conditions of Ābabā's elopement and the omniscient voice in

his reminiscence of their past life upto the time of their separation which makes him unsuitable as a source of this expositional information. In each case, it is a couple of careless initial statements attributing these roles to the two characters that cause the confusion as to the source of the background information. But then, the author makes no such inconsistencies in his novels Ya-badal Feṣāmē and Āmānu'ēl Darso Mals, where he presents the story through narrating characters with limited privileges of access.

Āklilu's motive for opposing Tēwodros is not revealed until after the vivid scene of the Emperor's coronation. When Āklilu returns from the scene of the celebration, the narrator says of him:

> His hatred for Tēwodros and his urge for revenge caused tremours to run through his body. This was not a new matter. It had occurred many times before. And the bout came in the form of a pain in the stomach and a feeling of dizziness. Like a nightmare, he recalled how it all started.
>
> It must have been more than ten years ago. Āklilu, Kāsā, and others who were seeking to become soldiers entered into the service of Rās Ali ....
>
> (p.22; emphasis mine)

After this suggestion that the delayed exposition is conveyed through Āklilu, as his reminiscence, the narrator reports how Kāsā's high courage and popularity made Āklilu jealous, and how, during a Christmas game, the wooden ball that Kāsā suddenly struck accidentally hit Āklilu's groin and made him permanently impotent. At least in the relay of these antecedents, the details are adequately within the reach of Āklilu's recall. But the authorial narrator's mediation in the relay of the background material is obvious, especially in such value judgements as, "Āklilu was a vain sort of person" (p.23). In contrast to Sāhlu's supposed reminiscence, however, the termination of the act of recalling is here marked by the character's physical movements and the shift in focus to his current (external) activity.

II

One distinctive quality of Ya-Tēwodros Enbā is its imaginative blending of factual and fictional details to present a convincing picture of the operations of the social forces that undermined Emperor Tēwodros' power and frustrated the fulfillment of his ambitions. Here there is no attempt to chronicle Tēwodros' life-history in the guise of a fictional story. By moving back and forth the story brings into its fold a select number of historical events. Berhānu's originality in the representation of the opposition to the Emperor lies in his dramatization of the alliance between the clergy and the nobility by linking Gārrad's rebellion with Āklilu's personal vendetta.The central action revolves around Āklilu's relentless struggle to destroy Tēwodros and, if possible, even assume power. As the emphasis is on his role in undermining Tēwodros, it is he, rather than Tēwodros, who is the central character of the novel. By using Āklilu as the mastermind of the anti-Tēwodros rebellions and by making Gārrad the armed hand of Āklilu, the author was able to weave together fiction and history in a unified narrative that is still as popular as before.

Without violating historical truth, the tightly-knit plot subordinates the factual events and personalities to its own requirements. The main historical personalities with vital roles in the plot are Tēwodros, Gārrad, and Gabreyyē, while the fictional ones are Āklilu, Qonjit, Yemanu, as well as Yāynē Ābabā and her father. The main historical events integrated into the framework of the plot are Tēwodros'coronation, the Shawā campaign, Gārrad's rebellion, The burning of Gondar, and the death of the Emperor.

The choice of the coronation as the starting point of the central action serves a number of functions. It serves to draw a striking contrast between Tēwodros and his principal adversaries right from the very start of the action. The Emperor emerges onto the scene dramatically, amidst thunderous ululations and resounding chants of his royal name by the masses of celebrators. Here he is, adorned in a

colourful silken robe, wearing a gold crown, his right hand resting on his sword and his left hand on his pistol. His majestic figure dominating everything around him, a graceful smile radiating from his face, he briefly stands on the balcony of Fāsil's castle and beholds the swarms of people below him. The atmosphere is vibrating with the throbs of festivity. There is singing and dancing all around. There seems to be a good cause for celebration, for the occasion goes beyond marking a mighty warrior's rise to the peak of power. Tēwodros' decree seems to have inspired hope in the hearts of his subjects. Slavery has been prohibited. The dignity of work, whether the tiller's or the artisan's has been affirmed. The harassment of the peasantry has been proscribed. Law and order are going to prevail. A just administration is going to be established. Even in the drawing on the first page of this chapter, the sun shining over the Gondar palace seems to herald a brilliant future. And the agent of all this benevolence would be Tēwodros, who is inspired by a noble dream of rebuilding the Empire into its ancient glory. As he towers over his subjects and his foes alike from the height of power, he seems to be beyond the reach of any schemers.

While Tēwodros crowns himself amidst such pomp and jubilation, his two adversaries, Āklilu and Gārrad, impassively watch the scene from a side corner. The two seem subdued by the grandeur of the celebration. They are physically and psychologically isolated from the multitude of celebrators. In contrast to the mood of jubilation of the large crowds, it is envy and malice that have filled their hearts. Āklilu has never forgiven Tēwodros for destroying his manhood during that Christmas game. Gārrad is bitter that he is not the one who is crowned today. Āklilu is using the coronation to fuel Gārrad's jealousy and turn him against Tēwodros. The nobleness of the Emperor's aspirations are thus put in sharp contrast with the baseness of his adversaries' motivations. Such a contrast helps to secure the reader's identification with the Emperor right from the start. The coronation also creates the illusion of an unalterable relationship between the invincibility of Tēwodros' and the apparent impotence of his adversaries.

This helps to sustain the reader's in Āklilu's attempts to turn the balance of power in his favour. In view of his earlier claim of responsibility for the downfall of the Emperor, the reader would be curious to know how he succeeded in mustering enough power to dramatically alter Tēwodros' position.

The pomp and jubilation marking this coronation also deepen the irony effected by the reversal of Tēwodros' fortunes when the central action is wound up. The Emperor whose coronation is greeted with ululation, dancing and singing is later received with groans of agony and moans of anguish. The churches whose bells chime to proclaim his ascent to the throne are later engulfed with fire. With houses and people aflame, Tēwodros is no longer"the bride of Gondar" but its harbinger of death. The very town in which he pledges to revive the ancient glory is later transformed into hellfire. The royal name that inspires optimism later becomes a byword for terror. The contrast is heightened even by the drawing appearing on the first page of the last chapter. In place of the sun shining over the Gondar palace, there is a skull with cross-bones propped up by two spears and a shield __ the sign of war and death.

The coronation is thus functionally integrated into the story. It is the point at which Āklilu begins enticing Gārrad into his schemes of overthrowing the Emperor. Āklilu soon realizes that the opposition of the two alone would not be enough to bring down Tēwodros. So, he decides to win over Gabreyyē, one of the Emperor's most trusted courtiers. On the second day of his coronation, Tēwodros makes important appointments. Gārrad's hope for a prominent post is dashed when he is appointed governor of a small district. Like the other power-hungry noblemen, he is incensed even more by the promotion of Gabreyyē as commander of the imperial army. When Tēwodros later outlines his programme for rebuilding and modernizing the country, therefore, the nobility disappointed by their modest posts voice their opposition to it with all kinds of arguments. Gabreyyē and Ālamē, however, stand on the Emperor's side. The new situation thus becomes more conducive for Āklilu's plan to

to alienate Tēwodros. The disgruntled noblemen could swell up his camp of opposition. Besides, Gārrad has been pushed further away from Tēwodros. The next task now is to see if Gabreyyē could be won over. But before he could do this, Gabreyyē and the Emperor leave on the expedition to Shawā. This makes it possible for Āklilu to devote his whole attention to strengthening his alliance with Gārrad.

By removing Gabreyyē to the battlefield, the Shawā campaign gives Āklilu sufficient time to boost Gārrad's confidence and ambition to the point where he would not hesitate to raise the banner of revolt. To this end, Āklilu takes him to many fortune-tellers and witch-doctors who all predict that power and glory await Gārrad in the days ahead. Such assurances convince Gārrad that he is destined to sit on Tēwodros' throne. Meanwhile the campaign ends successfully with the capture of young Menilek and the defeat of the Shawāns. Gabreyyē, however, has been wounded in the fight and is now nursed in his tent. This incident advances the plot by providing the two schemers with an excuse to make frequent visits to his tent. Under normal circumstances such calls would have easily aroused the suspicion of external observers. On the pretext of inquiring after his health and showing their goodwill, they now bring him presents of rams and tajj. Without giving him any hints as to their intentions they engage him in long conversations about various matters such as their past friendship and issues of power and loyalty. At one point he tells them his dream in which he thought the Emperor was accusing him of treason. The two readily grab their chance and obliquely ask him what difference it would make to him if the rebellion in his dream were real. But the provocation backfires for he begins to question their own loyalty to the Emperor. They, too, realize the danger caused by their blunder. From this point on, the action begins to gather momentum. The Shawā campaign also serves to complicate the action from a different angle. Sometime during the hectic preparation for the campaign, Qonjit pledges to St Gabriel of Qimembi to give a bull to the church on the day of his commemoration if her husband safely returns home from the campaign. When Gabreyyē gets

well, he and his wife make the unfortunate trip to fulfill Qonjit's pledge.

When Āklilu and Gārrad realize the prospect of their being exposed to the Emperor by Gabreyyē, they begin to look for ways of destroying him first. It is while searching for such an opportunity that they learn of his sudden departure to Qimembi. Gabreyyē has not told anyone other than the housemaid about the trip. He is unable to tell Tēwodros because the latter is away on a hunting trip at the time. Besides, Qonjit reminded him of her vow only two days before the commemoration day. So, on the assumption that they would immediately return after the holiday, they make their unannounced trip. But, once they reach there, their return to the court is delayed by a situation they have not anticipated. At the church, a wealthy peasant tells them a touching story about his daughter, Yāynē Ābabā, and humbly requests them to be his guests. Yāynē Ābabā, who has lost her mother, is very much attracted to Qonjit, whom she likens to her mother. That is why she presses her father to invite the two people. The couple feel obliged to accept the invitation. Gabreyyē becomes fascinated by the bliss of the pastoral life in Qimembi. Qonjit, who is childless, becomes increasingly attached to the affectionate Yāynē Ābabā. In this way, induced by the hospitality of the peasant, the charm of the little girl, and the tranquility around them, the couple spend more than a week in Qimembi. It is this long absence that Āklilu and Gārrad try to exploit to eliminate Gabreyyē.

They bribe Yemanu, the royal chamberlain, to misinform Tēwodros that Gabreyyē has rebelled[3] and that he is building up his army in Qimembi. A meeting is held to decide who should lead the campaign against the rebel. The power-hungry noblemen who have been disappointed by the promotion of Gabreyyē now see an opportunity to secure his post. Assuming that the leader of the expedition would be given the coveted post of the rebel, they begin to compete among themselves to be appointed for the task. In the absence of any consensus on the selection of anyone of the big candidates, Gārrad, who has been deliberately abstaining from the competition, is chosen to lead the campaign. At the

head of a thousand men, Gārrad and Āklilu thus begin their march to Qimembi. By the time they arrive at the church, however, news of the expedition has already reached Gabreyyē. So,he flees with his wife to Tēwodros' headquarters. With his escape from Qimembi, the plot takes another dramatic turn in the spiralling climax. As Gabreyyē tries to enter the royal court, the suspense is heightened by the imminent danger of his being killed by the guards before he reaches Tēwodros'chamber. Luckily, the darkness prevents them from identifying him and he thus comes face to face with the Emperor. There, he pleads his innocence as he explains his trip to Qimembi and the two men's earlier attempt to make him their accomplice. When Tēwodros learns of the plot against himself, he vows to personally destroy the culprits. But Gārrad and Āklilu, too, have realized the consequences of Gabreyyē's escape and started strengthening their forces.They plan to confront Tēwodros in Wagarā, where they count on the local people's support since the district is under Gārrad's governorship. The war is fought, Gārrad is killed, and Āklilu escapes. But Tēwodros also dearly pays for his victory. He loses in the battle John Bell, his closest English advisor and a source of inspiration for his ambition to build a strong and modernized empire.

Āklilu's role does not cease with the death of Gārrad. A year after this war, he disguises himself as a godly hermit and unexpectedly appears during a religious festival at the Trinity Church in Gondar. A lot of people have gathered in the churchyard. Just as Tēwodros has been the symbol of glory on the day of his coronation, so does Āklilu become the symbol of ascetism on this occasion. His youth, his chain-draped bare chest, his leather kilt, and his cross-topped prayer staff give him such a striking image of humility that the wildest tales about him begin to circulate in the congregation. Some say that he is the famous hermit of Māhbara Sellāsē Monastery. Others say that as he was abandoned by his mother in his childhood, he grew up suckling the breasts of a leopardess. And some others take him as a holy ghost. When Āklilu begins to deliver his sermon, therefore, he finds his audience in the

right frame of mind to accept his pronouncements no differently from a holy writ. None of them seem to mind the political orientation of his sermon, for his attack on Tēwodros is subtly couched in religious terms. The text of his sermon is a good illustration of the use of allusion in the blending of fact and fiction. It is also a convincing demonstration of the subtlety of the propaganda that the clergy made against Tēwodros. Here is what Āklilu says on this occasion:

> You have never seen me before but I have been in your midst. Nor will you see me again. Woe unto you! Woe unto you! Woe unto those who indifferently watch the decline of the Church! Woe unto those who allow intermarriage between artisans and God's chosen people! In the days of the good Christian king, Mass used to be held on the twenty fourth day [of the month]. But today, a church is forbidden to have more than five priests. The Ethiopian Church has come to a standstill. Children have been unable to receive the Holy Communion. The Book says that the servant should obey the master, the peasantry should obey the nobility, the gentry should obey the clergy. But today, let alone compliance, even courtesy has been prohibited by decree. It has become common practice for the farmer to till the ground and for the blacksmith to work on his articles on holidays. What kind of man is he who rebels against his in-laws and enthrones himself? What kind of infidel is he who outlaws the clergy? It is an abomination that has never occurred in Ethiopia before. God has raised His sword of wrath against him. God's scourge will visit the people who accept his authority. Pray for mercy! Take vows!
>
> (pp.132-133)

Before Āklilu finishes his sermon most of the congregation have begun genuflecting and hence he takes this opportunity to vanish from the scene. "That hermit did not

need to appear again," says the narrator, "for there were five hundred thousand clergymen who were ready to disseminate his message. Who would not die for his religion? When the priest agitates, the gentry take up to arms. After all, haven't the blessed marched to liberate Jerusalem?" (p.134) Thus the clergy and the nobility join hands in the relentless struggle against Tēwodros. His support among the ordinary people wanes. In just three months, he is forced to fight against seven rebels. The two people (his wife Tawābach and his advisor John Bell) whose companionship has been a source of compassion and a restraint on his violent temper are now dead. His political ideals have been nipped in the bud. His soldiers have begun to desert him. It is while in this state of isolation and frustration that he learns of the revolt of Gondar under the leadership of a hermit. Utterly demoralized by the unruliness of his subjects, he lets his army loose on them, and they turn the town into a glowing inferno. It is at this point that Āklilu comes face to face with Tēwodros, confesses his guilt, and pleads for forgiveness. For all Āklilu's efforts, Tēwodros has not been destroyed although his dream has been. When Āklilu, therefore, realizes the limits of his challenge, he formally renounces the pursuit of his revenge, thereby bringing the action to its final conclusion. "The end of any dramatic novel," says Edwin Muir, "will be a solution of the problem which sets the events moving; the particular action will have completed itself, bringing about an equilibrium, or issuing in some catastrophe which cannot be pursued farther."[4] In the case of Āklilu, the circle is closed at the end of the story (which is given in the epilogue). At the start of the action we find him dependent on one individual (Gārrad), but otherwise isolated from the multitude of celebrators around him. When the story ends, too, we leave him in a different state of isolation, still dependent on one individual (the young monk).

As has been shown above, therefore, the factual and fictional have been so well blended that there is no trace of undramatic historical reportage in the narration. It is in this quality that this work excells over Ābbē Gubaññā's voluminous historical novel on Tēwodros, Ānd Lannātu (1961E.C.).

III

In this novel there is a marked tendency to show the traits of the characters through dramatization in speech, thought, and action rather than direct naming of the traits. Although the narrator is not completely neutral, he generally refrains from overtly expressing his sympathies or reservations about the characters. His comments are brief, more ironic than patronizing, and functionally integrated with its context. When the focus turns to Āklilu and Gārrad during the celebration of Tēwodros' coronation, the narrator's comments are made to reinforce the dramatization of their traits. The dialogue between the two schemers advances the action while at the same time revealing what kind persons they are:

> At this time, Dabtarā Āklilu and Lej Gārrad were leaning against the stone wall of the stable, away from the dancing and the clamour. They were impassively watching the scene. There was little love between Gārrad, who liked to show off his weapons as he carries them about, and Āklilu, who was neither a priest nor a soldier. In fact deep at heart, Gārrad intensely despised Āklilu. But, when they began to lose the grace of Tēwodros, they were drawn towards each other by a common feeling. Thus, although they made no appointment to meet, Āklilu went to Gārrad's home this morning and the two came to the ceremony together.
>
> "What do you think of that?" said Āklilu, as he stroked his beard.
>
> "Of what?" Gārrad asked in return.
>
> "What you see up there!" said Āklilu pointing to the balcony. It was now empty, but it was obvious that he was referring to Tēwodros.
>
> "Nothing! It is as you see it," Gārrad shrugged his shoulders.
>
> "Doesn't his ascent astonish you?"
>
> "That is how life is. One rises, the other falls." Gārrad seemd to belittle the matter with

Hābashā [Abyssinian] wisdom.

"That is true. But when we were studying at Māhbara Sellāsē Monastery, I never imagined that he would climb up there and look down at me. Gārrad, yesterday's Kāsā and today's Tēwodros is in no way different from you and me. In fact, I used to outshine him educationally."

"Education? It is education that made you remain a dabtarā!" Gārrad smiled teasingly.

"And you?" Āklilu stared hard at Gārrad. "You used to floor him in wrestling matches. You used to outclass him in target-shooting."

"Please, leave me alone! What is the use of talking about the past? Used to... could have been ... !" Gārrad was angry with himself. He also resented Āklilu for poking at his wounds. It was no use now! Of course, Kāsā had been no different from him. In fact, he remembered the days when he came to Kāsā's aid when he was cornered by his assailants.

"Did I anger you?" asked Āklilu as if with concern.

"Why should I be angry?" Gārrad answered with indignation.

"When you realized that you were in no way inferior to him not to have reached where he is now."

"Whether I was inferior or superior, I am now below his feet." Gārrad sounded bitter and despondent. On the one hand, he resented Āklilu's poking his finger at his sore spots. On the other hand, his egoistic nature welcomed someone who would console him with such words.

"But," said Āklilu as if he read Gārrad's mind, "if we had not made ourselves the sheep, he wouldn't have become the lion."

Gārrad didn't answer. He was staring at the balcony, but his thoughts had gone beyond the horizon. His old dreams, yearnings, and ambitions returned in a chain. He could have been the one who stood on that balcony and received the cheers and

ululations of these people. Kāsā was not born annointed. Did he annoint himself or did we pave the way for him? It was Āklilu who awoke Gārrad from his reverie.

"But I shouldn't have said this," Āklilu seemed regretful. He knew that his trap had caught. Gārrad had lept into it. What remained now was to tighten the noose.

"Why?" Gārrad was insistent.

"However close I may be to you, Kāsā is still your relative. Blood is thicker than water. At the end of the day, it is the flesh that counts," Āklilu sounded regretful.

"You know my feeling for Kāsā? Pooh,flesh! Let the vulture devour our flesh! How can you think this of me?" He shook his head.

"I don't mean you as such. It is just that that is what I have found human nature to be. I want to trust my friend like myself. But that is how things are!"

"Don't say this , Āklilu. You should know me better than that."

"It is because I know you that I have chosen to be more intimate with you."

"Haven't you offended me with your remark then?"

"Ok, I am sorry."

At this point the drums were beaten to signal the start of the first round of the royal banquet.

"Are you going there now? I prefer to wait until the hustle abates," Āklilu said as he held Gārrad's arm and led him away.

"Me? Me? I don't care if I miss it."

"No! No! You must not stay away." Āklilu was anxious that the plot he had woven would disingrate at a pace beyond his control. "He is bound to look for you among the guests and he will become suspicious if he misses you there."

"Do I care a damn!" Gārrad was puffed up.

"Gārrad, apart from your courage, you could also use some ingenuity."

They left after agreeing to meet at Gārrad's home and then together go to the palace for the second round of the banquet.

"I have not done it to you yet, but I will!" said Āklilu as he headed to his home. In his mind, he was talking to Kāsā/Tēwodros.

(pp.17-21)

In the above dialogue, it is not only the hatching of the revenge-plot that unfolds gradually, but also the contrasting personalities of the two schemers. Āklilu emerges as a vindictive, cold-blooded, and shrewd schemer. He is a more formidable adversary than the vainglorious, unperceptive, and ambitious Gārrad. Āklilu is wily and diplomatic; Gārrad is gullible and blunt. Āklilu is relentless although not as bold as Gārrad. These features are implicit in their speeches and thoughts and occasionally confirmed in the narrator's commentary. But as the emphasis in their portrayal is on their role as the adversaries of the Emperor, the characterization does not delve deep into other aspects of their personality. In the characterization of Tēwodros,[5] too, as the emphasis is on his role as a public figure, very little of his personality as an individual is revealed.

There is some attempt in this novel to dramatize the mentality of the general public of that period. Quoting folksongs is one method used for showing the changing moods of the people (as when their attitude towards Tēwodros' campaign against Gārrad is shown in the songs of shepherds). But the most frequently used method is dramatizing their reactions through brief reports of gossip and dialogues by anonymous characters. In the first example given below, the narrator shows how people reacted when Tēwodros broke with tradition by crowning himself at a church that previous monarchs did not use for this purpose. In the second example, the narrator shows the people's attitude to the campaign against Shawā. In each case, the depiction is aimed at highlighting the disparity between Tēwodros' ideals and his subjects' old outlook:

When the morning sun began glowing with warmth ("When students relieve themselves," say Gondarēs), the once-quiet public square of Gondar became packed with boisterous crowds. Initially, the clergy of Gondar and the laity, who wouldn't even cut off a leaf without a priest's approval, had been sullen, in fact furious. How dare he choose to be crowned at Darasgē and not at the favourite church of Fāsil, Ādyām Saggad, and Empress Mentewāb? I tell you, he must have consulted a seer. What else do you expect from a Quāraññā? It is contempt! As he couldn't trace his descent beyond himself, he thought he could destroy the dynastic line of Gondar's aristocracy in this way! So went the gossip in religious gatherings and festivals. But when the day finally came, all the talk ended up being mere Gondarē bluffing:

"Are you going to the square tomorrow?"

"Of course! No question about it!"

"I will see you there then," they said to one another and passed the evening making such appointments.

(p.13)

In that year, Tēwodros made his campaign against Shawā. Gondar was again humming with rumour. Really, hasn't the man got any advisor? Where is all this galloping supposed to take him to? An army that has been continuously fighting for four years needs a break . If the soldier does not get enough chances to relax and enjoy his victory, he is bound to become resentful. You cannot blame him then. Not all soldiers are warmongers. There could be some. But, does the Emperor really believe he could subdue all the four corners with just these few? He must be naive. Although Wallo's second revolt was crushed, many soldiers died of an epidemic. A few months later, it became known that the rest of the fighters would march on Shawā. Has the man lost his senses?

> Once they are united no one can beat the Shawāns. Hāyla Malakot is no bluff like the pampered Rās Ali. He is the shrewdest of all shrewd men. That would be the end of Tēwodros! Some were sympathetic, others were sarcastic.
>
> (pp. 41-42)

While the private thoughts of the main characters such as Āklilu and Gārrad are consistent with their major dispositions, they remain plot-oriented. This can be seen in the following reaction of Āklilu when he realizes the failure of his attempt to make Gabreyyē their accomplice:

> ... even if we are caught, what would happen to me? thought he. The answer he got was: nothing! I would lose neither my land nor my governorship, said he in his heart. He didn't have both. He chose to be recognized as Tēwodros' opponent if he were to fail in his efforts to take revenge. So what if he was hanged, stoned, or burnt at the stake! He would be remembered not as a eunuch but as a hero. Yes, "the valiant Āklilu!" is sweet even on the tongue. But he had not chosen a horse name. It doesn't matter.
>
> "I will do it to this buffoon!" Āklilu's urge to destroy was stirred. Now it is not just Kāsā: Gabreyyē, too, has to be eliminated. He has been given the opportunity to save himself. But he has thrown it into the fire. He can't blame anyone. That idiot must be destroyed for his obstinacy and loyalty. It is stupidity to stand between two poles. Betrayal destroys, but loyalty also harms. Hasn't the Book said: be as innocent as the dove and as cunning as the snake? How can the two be combined? Like me, of course!
>
> I am loyal to Kāsā and Gārrad. I also plot against both. Does valiance mean anything else? May be Ālamē and Berrē, too, have to be destroyed with them. He had assumed that he could bring them over to his side through Gabreyyē. It is now futile.

> As if they were born stuck together, they wouldn't abandon Gabreyyē's clique to join his camp. They must all be destroyed. At the end of the day, even Gārrad himself must be .... It was a hot night. The āraqē that Āklilu drank lying in bed was now burning him inside.
>
> (pp.76-78)

In the above passage, the narrator tries to create an impression of Āklilu's personal style when presenting the thoughts. Sometimes he uses the mode of "interior monologue"[6] (as in: Like me, of course! I am loyal to Kāsā and Gārrad.), but frequently the mode of "indirect free style" (as in: So what if he was hanged, stoned, or burnt at the stake!). Occasionally, the thoughts are presented within quotation marks, but without the narrator's tag (as in: "I will do it to this buffoon!").

The differentiation of the disposition of the principal characters does not seem to extend to their language styles. Overall, brevity and lucidity mark the language of both the characters and the narrator. There are few descriptions of the physical appearance of characters and when one is given, it is rarely from close range. We don't know what Gārrad looks like, for instance. The significance of a character's physical appearance to his particular context seems to determine the degree of detail with which he is described. That seems to be why Tēwodros (on the day of his coronation) and Āklilu (on the day he delivers his sermon) are described relatively more vividly.

IV

In contrast to the characters' physical features, some of the events are described in very vivid details. Generally, the scenes are presented from the narrator's point of view. But in some cases, such as the burning of Gondar, a character's point of view is employed for purposes of thematic emphasis and charaterization. In the following passage, for instance, Tēwodros' perceptual point of view accentuates the irony in their claims of responsibility for the destruction that is wrought:

Tēwodros camped his army at the foot of Tegrē Machahiyā and climbed the hill alone. It was eight o'clock in the evening, but it was not dark. Gondar was illuminated. It was clearly visible upto Fantar. Tēwodros sat on a rock and looked down at the scene below. The forty four churches were glowing like big tallow candles. Even a bushfire has never been seen glowing like this. Church bells were clanging. The screams, wailings and clamour intermingled with the roar of the fire. People whose clothes caught fire were dashing in different directions like flashing meteors. Tēwodros thought the [door of] the hellfire that he knew only in the world of books and dreams was suddenly flung open below him.

In the blaze that looked like a seething sea of fire and in the sky-piercing wails of Rachel, Tēwodros imagined Ethiopia raising her hands to God in supplication. The burning town whose transformation into non-entity he was casually witnessing appeared to him as the demolition of Ethiopia itself. Why have You made me the giant of destruction? ...What wrong has my country done to deserve the scourge of Nineveh? My Lord, did You not inspire me to resurrect her? O, my country! Hasn't she already suffered enough tribulation for You to make me the agent of further destruction? Emperor Tēwodros covered his face with his hands and wept bitterly. When he raised his head, he found a hermit standing in front of him. Tēwodros was too benumbed to be shocked. But the fire, the hermit, everything appeared to him like a nightmare.

(pp.132-137)

Descriptions of physical settings such as compounds, buildings, and natural scenery are less frequent and generally sparse in details. Where they occur the emphasis is often on creating the atmosphere which harmonizes with the particular frame of mind in which the characters appear.

In the following example, the serenity of the night serves as a conducive backdrop to Gārrad's flight of fancy and Gabreyyē's romantic sentiment. In this description the two schemers' treacherous designs are are thrown into sharp relief. During their past visits they have been unable to sound Gabreyyē's attitude.

> One day, they thought the time was right for a try. The three were sitting on a rock in the backyard. There was a full moon in the sky. A light breeze was blowing. The plain of Dabra Tābor was stretched wide in front of them. Frogs were croaking. The howl of hyenas was heard off and on. Firelight flickered in the village on the hill beyond. It was the kind of evening when young men hummed love songs to their sweethearts.
>
> For many minutes they sat silently. Each was engrossed in his own thought. Āklilu was trying to guess what the others were thinking. But his guess was wrong. Gārrad was imagining himself standing on the balcony of Fāsil's castle and looking down at Lake Tānā in the moonlight. Gabreyyē was in a reverie of romance.
>
> "At such a time the valiant rebels," said Āklilu.
>
> Gārrad was about to rejoin with "and the slave deserts his master," but swallowed it back and said instead, "while the coward snores in his bed."
>
> (p.86)

In the most extensive description of setting presented when Gabreyyē visits Qimembi, local colour is exploited for deepening the sense of crisis. Although the details used are not very picturesque, they do generate images of idyllic life which heighten the contrast between the present atmosphere of tranquility and the turmoil that Āklilu and Gārrad are about to unleash. The harmony that prevails here is deliberately emphasized so as to magnify the atrocity to be committed by the rebels. The reader is held in suspense because he knows that the shadow of death is looming over Qimembi. But Gabreyyē is spell-bound by the

serenity of the place and the blissful life of the local peasants. He even thinks of settling down as a farmer when Tēwodros' big goals are achieved and the campaigns stop. His ignorance of the impending danger to his life makes the air throb with tension:

> When they left Dabra Tābor, they did not expect to spend more than two days in Qimembi. But the two days passed unnoticed. From the height of the hill the village of Qimembi overlooked a stretch of fertile agricultural land. In the morning, the peasant carried his lunch and went down to the plain to till his land. In the evening, he left his farm implements and oxen behind and and climbed the hill to his home. Apart from milch cows, horses, mules, and sheep, the rest of the animals were left in the cattle pens in the field below.
>
> The church of Qimembi was built half way up the hill. The man's home was located a little further up, where it would not be exposed to the cold wind. As additional protection against the cold, the compound was surrounded by juniper and accacia trees. From a distance these made it look like the compound of a church. Inside the thorn fence were one big family house, a small guest house, and a shelter for calves. The cowshed was located outside.
>
> The guest house had two wooden chairs, a leather-strapped bed, and a madab. The host led them to their room and left them for some moments. Then they were treated to a lavish supper which seemed to have been prepared during a whole week. There was minced meat, fried meat, raw meat, ṭallā, yoghurt, and milk. Yāynē Ābabā sat by the side of Qonjit. After two bites she said she had eaten enough and soon fell asleep on Qonjit's lap. Her father gently carried her to her bed.
>
> In the morning, as soon as they had relieved themselves and washed their faces, they were served

a warm breakfast with yoghurt. Gabreyyē found it hard to believe that he was being hosted by a peasant.

But what made them forget their journey home was not just the hospitality. It was the atmosphere of tranquility and Yānē Ābabā's affection. Here the beating of drums and the clamour and commotion of the court were absent. Here there was no talk of war and death. Here there were no intrigues, no plotters. Everyone pursued his own daily life. As Gabreyyē sat on a rock at the top of the hill and watched a farmer toiling in his field, a woman heading towards the stream to fetch water in her big clay pot, and the cattle grazing in the meadow below, his mind was filled with repose. When the snap of the whip-cord echoed across the hill, it did not herald death like the gunfire. When the farmer chanted the songs of valour, he was not inciting virulence and fury, but only charming his oxen. How much sweeter were the chirps of the birds than the flattery of the minstrel! Over there beyond the plain could be seen the gorge enveloped by mist. It was a splendid sight indeed. Like a noon-time spirit, it seemed to summon one with a mysterious voice. How much more exhilarating it must be to live alone in that wilderness!

(pp.100-102)

Notes and References

1. Expositional Modes and Temporal Ordering In Fiction (Baltimore, 1978), pp.53-54.

2. Sēyfu Mattāfaryā does not seem to notice the dislocation in the temporal ordering of the events of the story. See his review article: "Ānd Masehāf Ānababku: Ya-Tēwodros Enbā", Endih Naw, 2, no.1 (1958 E.C.) (19-24).

Commenting on the heading of the preliminary section ("Tewwest"), for instance, he says: "For this, other writers use such headings as 'Preface','Introduction', 'Note' and the likes. But this is only a matter of words " (p.19). The implication of this is that the other terms are as much applicable to the particular nature of this section. But, normally, the parts identified as 'Preface' or 'Introduction' are reserved for directly communicating to the reader information which is extraneous to the fictional world proper. The section headed "Tewwest", however, is part and parcel of the fictional world and a continuation of the story after Āklilu makes his final parting from Tēwodros. It is this particular element that Sēyfu overlooks, for he assumes that the story ends at the point where Āklilu confesses his crime to Tēwodros. Thus he says: "When the two finally meet, Āklilu, who fails to realize the harm he has done to Tēwodros, confesses: '...I destroyed the country. I caused the extermination of the people. But I have not taken my revenge on you.' Our author finishes his story at this point" (p.20; emphasis mine). The story, however, does not end here. It continues for as long as Āklilu is seen actively engaged in his existential role __ which is exactly what he is doing when he prays, talks to the monk, and "writes" the story after the death of Tēwodros. It is this final part that is transposed to the initial section of the novel. Being an additional part of the story that comes after the conclusion of the central action, it is by its nature neither a "Preface" nor an "Introduction" but an epilogue. To my knowledge, Berhānu is the first Amharic novelist to use an epilogue.His practice is followed by Baʿālu Germā, who coined the term "dehra tārik" (literally "post-story") as an equivalent version for the English word "epilogue". But, unlike Berhānu, when he first used the epilogue in his revised work Hādis (1975 E.C.), he presented it in the last section of the novel.

3. Berhānu seems to have exploited oral tradition when he made the plotters accuse Gabreyyē of treachery against Tēwodros. In his Ādis Ya-Āmāreññā Mazgaba Qālāt,

Dastā Takla Wald says under the entry "Gabreyyē" : "It is said that when he [Gabreyyē] plotted with the noblemen to dethrone Tēwodros and crown his son Dajāzmāch Mangashā, the Emperor summoned him and said to him, 'You are my Gabreyyē; Mangashā's Gabreyyē is another one.' Hearing this, Gabreyyē summoned the noblemen who had conspired with him and put them in prison."

4. The Structure of the Novel (London, 1928), p.58.

5. For a more detailed and comparative analysis of the characterization of Tēwodros, see my article "Tēwodros in Ethiopian Historical Fiction", Journal of Ethiopian Studies, vol. 16 (1983), pp.115-128.

6. Seymour Chatman in his book Story and Discourse explains the distinguishing features of the "interior monologue" as follows: "... it takes relatively very little in the way of direct free thought to suggest the effect of 'interior monologue'. ...though fragmentary syntax may accompany this style, the only obligatory technique is direct free thought — self-reference by first person pronoun (if used), the present orientation of verb tenses, and the deletion of quotation marks.

What absolutely distinguishes 'interior monologue' from other representations of consciousness is its prohibition of express statements by a narrator that the character is in fact thinking or perceiving. The words purport to be exactly and only those that pass through his or her mind, or their surrogates, if the thoughts are perceptions" (p.185). According to Chatman, the "indirect free style" does not characterize interior monologue "precisely because a narrator is presupposed by the third person pronouns and the anterior tense" (p.201).

See also Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan's Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics (London, 1983).

Chapter Seven

FEQER ESKA MAQĀBER

I

This very popular novel presents a panoramic picture of traditional Ethiopian society with a prophetic vision of change and a defiant voice that speaks out against feudal despotism, exploitation, and ignorance. It is a loosely-structured work that is wanting in design. The central action revolves around the love relationship between Bazzābeh and Sabla Wangēl. But before the reader reaches even the point where the couple come into close contact, he has to first traverse fifteen essentially preparatory chapters. As in Ār'āyā, the story begins with an announcement of the marriage of the hero's parents. The material dealing with the parents is not marshalled in such a way as to facilitate the smooth flow of the story without making digressions irrelevant to the development of the plot. The first four chapters begin with rather dull expositional summaries which are followed by dialogues of an illustrative nature. Some of the dialogues are repetitive in content, for they retrospectively deal with antecedents which have been reported in the opening summaries.

At the beginning of the first chapter, for instance, the narrator announces about the parents of Bazzābeh in this summary:

> In Gojjām, in the district of Dāmot, in a place called Mānkussā, there lived a lonely man by the name of Bogāla Mabrātu. He lost his poor parents in childhood and grew up in poverty. He began making his living by hiring out himself as a shepherd and later as a tenant farmer. In this way, he led a lonely and destitute life until he reached his middle age. For quite a long time, he

had no inclination to marry for he felt he was healthy and strong enough to manage without a marriage partner. But his relatives were worried that he would be left without support in his old age and hence urged him to find himself a wife. So, he married Weddenash Baṭāmu from Mānkussā.

As Weddenash Baṭāmu had been widowed three times before, she had been shunned by prospective suitors and she herself had abandoned any hope of marrying again. Apprehensive of bringing a similar misfortune upon a fourth husband, she had resolved not to consent even if she were proposed to. But after persistently asking her through her father-confessor, the Reverend Tāmeru, Bogāla Mabrātu was able to marry her.

(p.11)

When the reader learns from the above report that the marriage has already taken place, he naturally wants to know what happened next. But through a shift in focus to an earlier time, there follows a five-page dialogue in which Reverend Tāmeru tries to persuade Weddenash to accept Bogāla's proposal. The outcome of the dialogue is not different from what is reported in the opening summary. No new information of any consequence emerges from their discussion. After the dialogue, there comes a brief scene in which Weddenash recalls her past life and then complements herself for being attractive enough to make Bogāla defy death and propose to her. As the chapter closes with this scene, the story has not progressed any further than where it started through the initial summary.

In the second chapter, the slow pace of the story does not change. Here, too, the essential developments in the chapter are given in the opening summary. The emphasis this time is on depicting the relationship between the elderly couple. In the first paragraph of the chapter, the narrator reports:

At the end of the second year of the marriage of Bogāla Mabrātu and Weddenash Baṭāmu, a son was

born to them. But as the couple had been people of two different worlds, the early part of their married life was full of clashes and rancour. But, given adequate time for familiarization, let alone humans, even hyenas and donkeys, leopards and goats could be made to live together. Likewise, as time passed and as husband and wife came to know each other more intimately, their bond of love too, grew stronger.

(p.19)

After this report, there comes another summary in which we are told about Weddenash's family background and the freedom she used to have as a widow. Her friction with Bogāla is mentioned again and the narrator says, "Luckily, after crying and fuming so much, she forgot about it soon after" (p.20). In the next paragraph, Bogāla's past lonely life, his poverty, and its effect of strengthening his tolerance is reported. After another repetitive summary about the couple's frictions and love for each other, there comes a scene in which Bogāla and Weddenash clash and soon reconcile. At the end of this scene, the narrator sums up the illustrative significance of the incident by repeating: "Weddenash and Bogāla were spouses who loved each other dearly. But because their upbringing and past life-style were different, the early part of their married life used to be full of clashes and rancour. Fortunately, these clashes did not cause grudges, for what followed them was warm love" (p.29). What is reported after the opening summary hence has little contribution to the development of the subsequent events as its content only amplifies what is reported initially.

In the third chapter, the opening summary itself is repetitive and retrogressive. Although we have been told of the birth and blabber of the hero in the previous chapter, the third one begins with an enumeration of the diseases he suffers from the age of three months to the age of five years. Despite the meanderings in the account of his childhood ailments and how his desperate mother is driven to pledge her only son to the service of the tābots

[saints or angels], it is in this chapter that the parents play their most important role in the plot — facilitating Bazzābeh's bondage to the Church. His schooling is an immediate consequence of the mother's holy vow. Later, this education facilitates his contact with his future lover. Once his consecration to the Church is realized and the hero is educated, the parents role in the plot comes to an end. So, in the fifth chapter, when Bazzābeh is on his own, the parents are clumsily removed from the scene within a short space of time.

In the next four chapters, the focus is fixed on Bazzābeh. Each of these is devoted to one minor occasion, but the story moves at a pace relatively faster than in the previous chapters. In the sixth chapter, he learns of the death of his parents. In the seventh one, he snubs the sexual overtures of his elderly hostess and travels to Dimā. In the eighth chapter, he acquaints himself with the students and teachers of the Qenē school. In the nineth one, he is introduced to the family of his future lover. Although the author thus spends so much space to orient the reader with the hero's background, he also resorts to the more economical alternative of providing the expositional information at a more crucial point in the plot in the form of a summary. Soon after Bazzābeh begins tutoring Sabla Wangēl, he recounts to her all the essential developments in his past life, thereby supplying the reader with the background information at a point where it would be relevant for appreciating the couple's predicament. However, as the reader already has this information the present communication becomes superfluous. Sabla Wangēl's childhood experience, by contrast, is more appropriately presented through her own account and at a point where it can be seen in juxtaposition with Bazzābeh's situation.

In the next chapters that follow Bazzābeh's introduction with Sabla Wangēl's parents, there are only occasional references to him. He is not yet in a position to enter into a love relationship with her. The essential function of these chapters is to lay bare the circumstances of the heroine and to introduce the important characters around her. Nevertheless, the centre-stage is held by her father

Fitāwrāri Mashashā. The main event which unnecessarily takes up most of the space here is Mashashā's conflict with Fitāwrāri Āsagē. Although it is Sabla Wangēl's marriage that is at the heart of the dispute, she does not directly play any role in its development. Nor does the outcome of this issue have any direct bearing on her subsequent relationship with Bazzābeh. But the event does forcefully project Mashashā's capricious and vainglorious personality. At a doddering age of seventy years, he challenges the younger Āsagē to fight him in a duel with sword and spears. And he makes this challenge because he thinks that Āsagē's proposal to marry Sabla Wangēl as a divorcee rather than as a virgin is an affront to his honour. It is after this event that Mashashā invites Bazzābeh to become Sabla Wangēl's tutor and thus paves the way for the central action to take off.

From the point of view of plot, what then is the main issue which the first fifteen chapters set forth? Bazzābeh is the son of a peasant family. On top of this his mother's consecration requires him to devote his life, in celibacy, to the service of the Church. Sabla Wangēl, on the other hand, is the first and only child of a prominent feudal lord who is extremely proud of his aristocratic lineage and social status. He and his wife have turned down the proposals of many suitors simply because they regarded their class background as inferior to their own. Granted that the young couple are now in a position to love each other, will they be able to overcome their respective barriers? This is the central issue which the plot raises. Its development and resolution, however, proceed through dramatic reversals that seem to be effected more by chance than by logical necessity.

After Bazzābeh begins tutoring Sabla Wangēl, the story develops along two parallel lines[1] for a short while. One centre of interest is constituted by the new love relationship between the young couple. The other is constituted by Mashashā's conflict with the peasants. These parallel developments have no direct bearing on each other. The essential link between them is Mahsashā. His conflict with the peasants is a spontaneous occurrence that does not

of necessity evolve out of the given antecedent circumstances. One afternoon, a delegation of peasants turns up and declares to him the inability of the people on his three fiefs to give him presents of bulloks for Easter. Mashashā takes this as a snub and wages a campaign of plunder and harassment to punish the peasants. His absence from home creates a more conducive situation for the young couple to develop their intimacy with greater freedom. Taking advantage of her husband's absence from home, Teru'āynat makes frequent visits to her neighbour's home to flirt with her secret lover. As this leads to the slackening of her supervision of the relationship between the tutor and her daughter, the young couple get the opportunity to develop an affection for each other. But soon something unexpected occurs. Although the couple are still not in a position to be seen together outside Sabla Wangēl's private chamber, their love somehow becomes the subject of village gossip. People begin talking about Sabla Wangēl's becoming pregnant. Apparently, this rumour is a device used for complicating the plot. Thus it is only after Gudu Kāsā, her uncle, gets wind of it that the couple become aware of the rumour about them. After ascertaining its falsity from them, he advises them to elope before Mashashā returns home. As the lovers frantically race against time to complete their preparations before Mashashā's return, the atmosphere becomes increasingly tense. To heighten the suspense, the narrator withholds the information about Mashashā's activity after his capture by the peasants and instead dwells on the anxieties and nightmares of the couple. The action comes to a major reversal when Mashashā suddenly turns up on the very day the couple are about to elope. The time of his arrival is a matter of chance although his awareness of the rumour about his daughter's pregnancy does contriute to the speeding up of his return home. When Sabla Wangēl defiantly announces to him her love for Bazzābeh, Mashashā assumes that she has been put under a magic charm. Hence, he threatens to torture Bazzābeh and force him to release her from the spell he has cast on her. But Gudu Kāsā soon intervenes and advises Bazzābeh to flee to Addis Ababa. He

promises him to bring him Sabla Wangēl there.

While he is in Addis Ababa, Bazzābeh finds a good job, rents a big house and makes extensive preparations to start a new life when Sabla Wangēl arrives. In a second reversal of his fortunes, he learns with shock the plan for the wedding of Sabla Wangēl. But there is no apparent justification for his surprise at the news of the wedding. On the night that Mashashā aborts their plan to elope, he replies to his daughter's defiant declaration of her love for Bazzābeh by saying : "My daughter would not love that scab-ridden son of a scrounging peasant! I have already accepted the proposal of a great nobleman of esteemable aristocratic descent..." (p.410). Mashashā makes this announcement in the presence of Gudu Kāsā, who helplessly pleads with him to let her marry whomsoever she chooses. Since Gudu Kāsā soon reports to Bazzābeh what went on on this night and even promises to help them be reunited, he would be unlikely not to warn him of the possibility of Mashashā's going ahead with his daughter's marriage. Anyway, when Bazzābeh learns of the wedding from the merchants, he attributes his misfortune to the potency of his mother's holy vow and abandons all hopes of escape from that bondage. So, he writes to his lover a long letter of farewell in verse and disappears from Addis Ababa. When the focus turns to Sabla Wangēl, the action takes an improbable course.

Just as Mashashā aborts the elopement by turning up on the eve of their escape, Sabla Wangēl, too, spoils her parents' plan by running away on the eve of her wedding. The timing of her action seems a little contrived, the manipulation apparently being necessitated by the need to make its impact on the parents dramatic and ironic. The reader's scepticism is aroused by the fact that there are just too many people around for her to make her escape unnoticed, especially as it is reported that her parents' suspicion has been increased by the marked change in her behaviour as of the day before. The narrator also fails to explain why Gudu Kāsā is unable either to fulfill earlier his promise to Bazzābeh or to accompany the inexperienced Sabla Wangēl on her journey after her escape.

It is natural for Sabla Wangēl's parents to react with

shock and grief when they learn of their daughter's escape. But the manipulation of the situation becomes too obvious when they both die in accidents on the same day. During the search for his daughter, while galloping heedleesly, Mashashā falls from his horse and dies instantly. His wife falls down from the steps of a church and dies a few hours later. Their melodramatic deaths bear some resemblances to those of Bazzābeh's parents. They, too, are struck with grief when their son runs away from home. Bogāla dies of pulmonary conjestion a week later. His wife falls ill on the day he is buried and she dies three days later. Ironically enough, Weddenash is again widowed, even if briefly, for the fourth time just as she has apprehended.

Sabla Wangēl's dangerous journey through the jungle seems to be a pointles diversion that lowers the seriousness of the novel to the level of light entertainment. Disguised as a monk, she travels alone through a wild jungle where she encounters a wolf, a hyena, a leopard, and a lion. Yet, none of them attack her, and her prayers are repeatedly answered positively just at the nick of time. When she finds it difficult to climb down from the tree she has been hiding in and begins praying, two honey-collectors soon arrive and bring her down. Exhausted by hunger and suffering from the pain of the wounds on her feet, when she is unable to walk and so begins praying for help, a mule driven by its kindly owner arrives and stops near her spot. But this is not all; the owner also happens to be returning from the funeral of Sabla Wangēl's parents. Despite all the physical signs they notice on her none of her rescuers suspect her fimininity. Nor does the narrator overtly identify the monk as Sabla Wangēl until her reunion with Bazzābeh. Although Sabla Wangēl's attempt to hide her true identity from strangers is understandable, the narrator's inexplicablly withholding this information from the reader serves no apparent purpose.[2]

After she learns of the death of her parents, she goes to Addis Ababa, where she learns of the disappearance of Bazzābeh. On her way back she passes the night at a roadside guest-house. There, she discovers that the sick man

groaning in bed is Bazzābeh. They are married while he is still in his death-bed, but he dies on the next day. Despite all his attempts to escape from his bondage, he dies a celibate. She retires as a nun to the nearby church. Twelve years later, Gudu Kāsā by accident finds her there. As though she has been waiting just for his arrival, she dies two weeks later. Gudu Kāsā buries her in the grave she has prepared for herself beside Bazzābeh's. Three years later, he, too, dies and is buried by their side. In this way, the title of the novel, "Love unto the Grave", finds its justification through the fate of the principal (positive) characters.

II

Feqer Eska Maqāber has a densely populated social world. As its characters aredrawn from various walks of life, it presents a wide cross-section of the Ethiopian society of the early twentieth century. Among its many characters, we meet noblemen (Fitāwrāri Mashashā and Fitāwrāri Āsagē), clergymen (Ābbā Mogasē and Ālaqā Sergaw), peasants (Bogāla Mabrātu and Ābajja Balaw), poets and teachers (Bazzābeh and Ālaqā Kenfu), slaves (Hābtesh Yemar and Lekurā Bahullu), businessmen (Nagādrās Hunaññāw), students from the Dimā Qenē school, and the Emperor (who is not identified by name). We also meet such a radical intellectual as Gudu Kāsā and a writer and art "critic" as Gerā Getā Qalamawarq. There are over fifty characters who are identified by names and assigned some role in the story. The inclusion of such a large number of characters has undoubtedly given the social canvas of the story a greater breadth than is found in previous novels. But the way this was done was at the expense of depth in characterization. From among the fifty or more characters, for instance, it is only about twenty characters that reappear in more than one of the thirty four chapters of the novel. This means that, although they compete with the major characters for the reader's attention, about thirty or more of the minor characters have a life-span of no more than one chapter.

The author seems to create his characters at will, anywhere in the story and for every minor function that may need an agent. Once that task is fulfilled he dispenses with them likewise. Characters with some peripheral roles thus constantly crop up and vanish immediately in various parts of the story, including even the last chapter. In the first chapter, for instance, we learn from the opening summary that it is Reverend Tämmeru who persuades Weddenash to marry Bogäla. In the subsequent dialogue, we find the priest playing the same role. When the dialogue is over, he disappears from the rest of the story. In the fifth chapter, a new character, Reverend Meheratu, is created to arrange for the funeral of Bogäla. After that he, too, disappears. In the sixth chapter, Dabtarä Bayyana appears on the scene. His role is to inform Bazzäbeh about the death of his parents, and so once that is done, we never hear of him again. Even if one were to argue that these functions need an agent, there is no reason why all the three tasks couldn't be carried out by just one character, say, Reverend Tämmeru. As the father-confessor of Weddenash, he is duty-bound to arrange for her husband's funeral and to see to it that Bazzäbeh is informed of his parents' sudden death.

Apart from the proliferation of minor characters, another lack of control is manifested in the tendency of some intermediate characters to eclipse the major ones. Häbtesh Yemar, for instance, appears to have been given more vitality than is Sabla Wangël. She is vivacious, witty, and uninhibited. In most of the scenes in which she appears, she draws to herself not only the reader's attention but also that of Bazzäbeh and Sabla Wangël. Unlike these two, she is capable of laughing at her misfortunes and keeping herself and her companions in good spirit. Sabla Wangël thus says of her: "when she laughs, cries, and sings, she can easily transform the feelings of the people with her by making them laugh, cry, and sing just as she likes.... No one would feel depressed when she is around. If God had not given her to me , I don't know how I would have borne [my situation] " (pp.312-313).

Häbtesh Yemar seems to be a character that has outgrown

her bounds. Her prime function seems to be to provide an ironic contrast which would highlight Sabla Wangēl's predicament. Although she is the daughter of a prominent aristocrat, Sabla Wangēl is put under restrictions no less degrading than Hābtesh Yemar's slavery. She has no freedom of movement, for she is not allowed even to be seen alone outside her private chamber. She cannot openly express her feeling in the presence of other people. She has no friend other than her slave, for she is not allowed to meet or talk to outsiders. As the gossips in the church aptly describe her, she is "the slave of honour". She cannot marry any man other than the one chosen for her by her parents. Hābtesh Yemar, by contrast, is under no such restrictions. She can visit places alone, meet and make friendship with anyone she likes, love and marry people of her choice. It is such a situational contrast that is illustrated by the scene in which Sabla Wangēl watches Gabrē and Hābtesh fondling. When the two servants chase one another and then disappear in the grassy garden, perhaps to make love, Sabla Wangēl says to herself: "Just like the butterflies and bees! You have no one who would accuse you of disgracing them and rebuke or punish you!" And the narrator adds to this: "Because the freedom of the servants reminded her of her own slavery, her smile faded with dejection" (p.98).

The most memorable character who dominates the story is Fitāwrāri Mashashā. He is a caricature built on a few negative traits. His most distinguishing feature is his excessive pride in his aristocratic lineage. His inflated self-regard, which occasionally borders on megalomania, is what makes him stand out in sharp relief from the other characters. This aspect of his personality is underlined from the very start when his contempt for other noblemen and wealthy people is dramatized via his response to the proposals of his daughter's suitors. The extent of his vanity can be gathered from his claim of direct descent from monarchs such as Ellēni, Galāwdēwos, and Susnyos, who lived more than three centuries ago.

[1]"Amazing ! The ears don't refuse to listen,

you know!" the Fitāwrāri would say as he came in.

"What have you heard this time, my lord?" his wife Wayzaro Ṭeru'āynat would reply.

"Qañña̅zmāch so-and-so has asked me for the hand of Sabla Wangēl for his son."

"Whose son is Qañña̅zmāch so-and-so?"

"Let alone me, even he himself doesn't know his father."

[2] "Ṭeru, Grāzmāch so-and-so has asked me to let his son marry my daughter."

"Whose son is he, my lord?"

"His father is not a human being but a farmer."

"I wish I were dead rather than hear this!"

[3] "Fitāwrāri so-and-so wants my daughter's hand for his son."

"Whose son is he?"

"His father was a strap-biting[3] merchant."

"I wish she were not born rather bring such disgrace upon us."

[4] "Bālāmbarās so-and-so has sent a mediator to ask me for the hand of my daughter... ha! ha! ha! such an era!"

"Whose son is he?"

"His father was a rude peasant with a lot of cows. At his death, his son inherited all the cows and began to quaff off jug-fulls of whey. Now, when his stomach began to bulge out, he felt he has become equal to other people and so started asking for the hand of our daughter!"

"Let him insult us! Let him snub us! We deserve even worse. When we should have moved to a place where worthy people live, we have been stuck here as if we were prisoners. Now we have become the plaything of peasants," Ṭeru'āynāt would say, her eyes filled with tears.

"Oh, you! What people are you talking about in an era when all the human grain is gone and only the chaff remains? Wherever you go, at the utmost you will find only people with fathers but hardly grandfathers."

"How so?"

"Well, one sells his crop, another his butter, another his hides and skins. Then they offer bribes and get the titles of Bālāmbarās, Grāzmāch, and Fitāwrāri. In turn, their children would be called the son of Bālāmbarās so-and-so, Qañña̤zmāch so-and-so, Grāzmāch so-and-so, and Fitāwrāri so-and-so. It is like the game that the children of Sa̤ttañ and Āraru [names of slaves] play here in our compound by calling each other 'Fitāwrāri', 'Qañña̤zmāch', 'Grāzmāch'! It is a fitāwrāri, a qañña̤zmāch, not inherited with blood, but bought with cotton and hides. Ho! ho! What an era has come upon us! You see, it is the sons of such people that ask for the hand of our daughter. Thanks to cotton, thanks to leather, their fathers have been dubbed 'Grāzmāch', 'Qañña̤zmāch', and some even 'Fitāwrāri' like us. How can I give my daughter to such suitors? How can I give the daughter of Ellēni, Galāwdēwos, and Susnyos to the sons of farmers and merchants? Even if they couldn't see and hear, wouldn't their bones reproach me?" the Fitāwrāri would say, his head shaking and his blood boiling with rage.

"Even if you were to consent, my daughter shall not marry a man of broken bones [i.e., of low origin] before I am laid in my grave. In fact, it is much better for her to remain a spinster rather than marry her unequal and desecrate her lineage. People would then esteem her as one who couldn't find her match."

"You are right," the Fitāwrāri would say.

(pp.85-87)

Although no break is made in the flow of the above text to mark the time intervals, the four occasions of the dialogues are discernible from the titles of the men that are supposed to be making the marriage proposals. On the first occasion, the proposal is made by a Qañña̤zmāch, in the second one by a Grāzmāch, in the third by a Fitāwrāri,

and in the fourth by a Bālāmbarās. The four dialogues have not actually taken place. In an actual situation the couple would refer to the match-maker by his name proper rather than as "so-and-so". The anonymity would be unnatural in such contexts, for the husband is telling his wife about proposals she has not known about beforehand. The formulaic pattern in the questions and answers also obviates the artificiality of the discourse. What the narrator has done is to devise mock dialogues[4] which would dramatize the couple's typical responses to suitors who don't seem to have a well-established aristocratic lineage. In each of the four instances, the quality which the parents seek from a suitor is not personal virtue or wealth but an aristocratic class background. The choice of four rather than one such occasion for the dramatization serves as a sort of statistical proof validating the narrator's initial claim that the parents are responsible for making Sabla Wangēl waste the prime years of her life without being married. The repeated manifestation of the same response also projects their vanity as a stamp of their personality. Although the wife is here shown sharing her husband's prejudices, it is his smug sense of honour which becomes the driving force in most of the developments in the family. He is a domineering person who is intolerant of anyone who does not toe his line. In the foregoing dramatization itself, it is implicit that he has already turned down the proposals before consulting his wife.

Mashashā's inflated self-esteem and capricious temperament constantly puts him at odds with the people around him. Wherever he is, there is almost always tension in the air, and this draws the reader's attention to him. After Bazzābeh begins tutoring Sabla Wangēl, for instance, Mashashā summons him to report to the guests how studious his daughter is. When Bazzābeh begins his report, Mashasha suddenly interrupts him and orders him to leave. He is angry with him for addressing his daughter with the informal form of the pronoun "she" ("esswā") instead of with the more formal one ("essāchaw"). Again, while the marriage between Āsagē and Sabla Wangēl is being discussed,

one of the family's relatives argues against it by pointing out the big age difference between the two. Ṭeru'āynat counters this argument by pointing out that she and her husband have a successful marriage in spite of his being twenty seven years older than her. This enrages Mashashā and he rebukes her for exaggerating the age difference. His claim is that he is only twenty five years older than her. There are many such instances when Mashashā puts every one on edge. The one thing that is sure to keep him in good spirit is flattery. When the first delegation of peasants come to congratulate him on the peaceful settlement of the duel, he gets angry with them for not showing their goodwill by bringing him a present of ram. But when he is told that the peasants have composed songs that extol his valour and his "victory" over Āsagē, his anger vanishes instantly and he orders that they be served ṭajj.

Mashashā is the principal catalyst of not only the tension in the story but also of the dramatic ironies that enhance its flavour. At the time of the dispute with the peasants, he refuses to accept their explanation for their failure to offer him presents for the Easter holiday. The peasants tell him that their cattle have been ravaged by disease and their crops destroyed by pests. The elderly messengers bow low and beg him for compassion. But he rejects their pleas and orders that they be put in chains. Later, he releases them on the condition that they ask their people to send him six bullocks as an apology for their defiance. When the peasants on his three fiefs refuse to pay this fine, he decides to wage a punitive campaign against them. From the testimony of the level-headed men such as Qañña̅zmāch Ākālu and Bālāmbarās Metteku regarding the invincibility of the might of the rebellious peasants and the past heroic exploits of their leader, Ābajja Balaw, the reader can gather that Mashashā is heading for a crushing defeat in his adventurous confrontation. The warnings of his relatives fail to discourage him from embarking on this unfortunate venture. With each contumptuous remark he makes about the peasantry, Mashasha lends more power to the irony that attends the resolution of the conflict. Here are a few of his remarks:

Against whom have peasants rebelled and ever won a victory? A peasant likes not the weak but the mighty. All you have to do is harden your arm against him and then you can milk him non-stop, until your pot fills! It is in the nature of a peasant to whine, lament, or even scare the cowardly. But if he is faced with the bold and resolute, he eventually surrenders and pays what he is asked. A peasant has never become bold and poor. He has a lot to care for and much to worry about. Hence he does not dare to fight back. As the saying goes, a peasant may not have anything to eat but never lacks something to pay!

(pp.217-218)

When peasants humiliate me, would my throat be willing to swallow food? Would sleep ever come to me?

(p.277)

Even if a clash occurs, is it I, Mashashā, who retreat from peasants? How on earth can peasants defeat me? They may be able to kill me. But while my body and soul are in one piece, retreat from peasants, defeat by peasants is unthinkable! You don't know me!

(p.277)

It is for peasants to take orders . I have neither heard nor seen them being entreated. I have found a good opportunity to see whether I am the beggar or the master of my fiefs. Without any help from you, I shall go with my servants and teach the peasants that I am the ruler and they are the ruled.

(p.273)

What astonishes me is why the rebellion of peasants should become the cause for so much concern, as if it were a serious matter! When all I want to do is punish rude peasants, why it should be regarded as war!

(p.277)

After such boasting, Mashashā starts his campaign leading a collective force of seventy men armed with guns and fifty men armed with spears and shields. When he reaches Ennāmorā, he encounters no resistance since all the able-bodied men have disappeared leaving behind just their women, children, the old and the sick. He harasses these helpless people, confiscates their honey, butter, cattle, grain as well as other moveable property and sets fire to some of their houses. He orders the slaughter of many sheep and bullocks and the preparation of a lavish feast for his followers. A few days later, he marches on Gullit, where he again encounters no resistance. After similar plundering and harassment of the local people, he marches on Gorgor. By this time he has confiscated a lot of cattle, sheep, and goats. Satisfied with the success of his expedition, he plans to return home on the next day, via Ennāmorā, where he intends to burn down the house of the rebels' leader and loot some of the left-over property. But on the night he makes this plan, the house in which he and his concubine are sleeping is suddenly engulfed by fire. When he awakens, he doesn't find the time even to put on his clothes let alone to look for his gun. Covering his naked body with just his gābi (heavy toga) , and with his trousers draped over his shoulders, he hastily runs out of the house with his concubine. Outside, someone calls him over and leads him by the hand away from the fire. With his left hand grabbed by the man and his right hand holding his concubine's arm, Mashashā stands between the two people and watches with stupor the destruction of his booty stored in the house. When he recovers from this shock and realizes that a stranger is holding his hand, he tries to jerk it free. But he finds that the hand that is holding him is "as heavy and strong as steel". To his consternation, the stranger happens to be Ābajja Balaw, the very man whose house Mashashā was planning to burn down the next day. It was Ābajja's tactic to let Mashashā proceed with his plunder unresisted so as to lure him into their trap. His plan is fulfilled almost to the last detail, with all the aggressors subdued without a fight. Ābajja Balaw (the name means "Good-That-You-Beat-

Him") ties his hands and keeps him under house-arrest with the other captives. But quite in contrast to the way Mashashā has treated the elderly messengers of the peasants, Ābajja treats him with some courtesy, addressing him as "my lord".

Thus Mashashā, the "bold and resolute" master, suffers a humiliating defeat at the hands of the "whining" and "lamenting" peasants, without a single blow being struck and while his "body and soul are in one piece". He is stripped of not only his great honour but also the very symbol of his manhood __ his trousers __ and his arm is held just the way he holds his woman's arm. He has set out to "punish the rude peasants", but they hit him back where it hurts him most: his pride and his privileges. What is left of the booty he has collected is returned to its proper owners. When he is taken to court, he again suffers the indignity of being put under the custody of Fitāwrāri Āsagē, the same man whom he earlier challenged to a duel to "defend" his honour. In the legal battle, too, the peasants score another victory over him. The court fines him two hundred berr for the damage he has caused and strips him of his rights to his three fiefs and of his authority over the peasants under his control, just as Qañ̈ñāzmāch Ākalu has predicted from the start. Mashashā thus ends up losing what he already had. Still, his hubris is such that he remains unrepentant and his misfortunes, too, become more tragic.

After the dispute with the peasants is over, he consoles himself when he learns that the aristocrat who has bailed him out, Fitāwrāri Tafarrā, is asking for the hand of Sabla Wangēl in marriage. But this consolation is soon shattered when he learns the rumour that his daughter, that descendant of Empress Ellēni, has been made pregnant by the son of a "scrounging" peasant. To his great relief, it turns out that the rumour is false. But his daughter also warns him that she is not willing to marry anyone except Bazzābeh: "Bear this in mind as of today! As long as I am alive, I am not going to be given away to someone that I don't want. If it is of any value, You can do what you like with my corpse" (p.411). This signals to the reader

that something may go wrong again, and this anticipation is further reinforced by Mashashā's ironic statement that his daughter's wedding would be one and the same as his tazkār. Some seven months later, the preparation for a grand wedding begins. A large number of sheep and bullocks "enough to feed not only the population but also the hyenas" of five districts is slaughtered for the wedding feast. A huge wooden canopy "wide enough for horses to gallop in" is built for entertaining the guests in it. For the first time in his life, Mashashā engages in physical labour when he gives a helping hand to the servants. The dancing and singing start a week ahead of the wedding, and Mahsashā himself warms up the merriment by improvising songs with broken rhymes. At last the dream of his life is going to come true: his daughter is going to be married to a man of impeccable aristocratic lineage. The event is taken as a blessing in disguise in another sense also. On the eve of the wedding, Mashashā puts it to his wife as follows:

> "God is a great and generous master. He punishes with one hand and amends with the other. He is a benevolent master who never makes one lose hope. After inflicting upon me all that suffering last year, if He had not sent me this joy, what could have made me forget my torment? Yes, although God can be unjust, He also knows how to recompense! Teruyyē, let us forget His injustice and thank Him for His amends!" said Fitāwrāri ....
>
> "Yes, my lord. He deserves our gratitude!" said Teru.
>
> "Yes, our dream has come true. Our wish has been fulfilled. Congratulations, Teruyyē!"
>
> (pp.478-480)

It is while in such a mood of jubilation that Mashashā and his wife receive the shocking news of their daughter's escape. This dramatic reversal of his misfortune consitutes by far the most painful blow to his pride. The power of its sting can be inferred from their butler's monologue:

> To tell them this disaster while they are in such a state of jubilation would be the cruelest of all cruelties. It would be more terrible than showing them paradise and throwing them into hell! Wouldn't it be better to kill them? While they are singing and revelling thus, if someone could stealthily approach them and shoot them dead, he would indeed prove himself as the truest and most compassionate relative they have ever had,
>
> (pp.486-487)

If Mashashā and his wife had been made to live with their humiliation, one can imagine how excruciating their pain would have been and, consequently, how much more intense its purgative impact on the reader.

Despite the artificiality of their death, the situation after this tragedy remains not only ironic but also comic. Just as Mashashā has unwittingly predicted, his daughter's wedding turns, in a way, into his tazkār. Here is how the narrator presents this sensational event in which joy and sorrow cross paths:

> The bridegroom, Fitāwrāri Tafarrā Denbaru, had not known about the tragedy in Fitāwrāri Mashashā's home. He was escorted by a large cortege befitting a nobleman of his stature and entertained by musicians blowing horns and trumpets as he rode to the home of the bride. When he passed the hamlets along his way, the villagers cheered him with resounding ululations. At noon the party reached the outskirts of Dimā and camped in a wide field. As custom demanded, they then began to wait for the parents of the bride to send elders and formally invite them to the wedding place.
>
> And sure enough, relatives and elders from the bride's side were sent to the waiting party. Only it was not to take them to the wedding but to the funeral! Not to the songs but to the wailings!
>
> (p.490)

Mashashā is one of the few vivid representations of the feudal class in the Amharic novel. He epitomizes feudalism and hence his satirical rendition amplifies the basest traits that are associated with the exponents of that moribund social system. Although he is thus painted in predominantly negative terms, as a character he has more appeal than the young couple, Gudu Kāsā, and Ābajja Balaw, who are presented in a sympathetic light. He is the villain of the story and is antagonistic to the lofty ideals of Gudu Kāsā and Ābajja Balaw. But by the sheer weight of the resolution and passion with which he pursues his own ideals, Mashashā can dwarf his two major opponents and inspire the reader, by negative example.

While the speeches of the other characters are generally short, they occasionally become lengthy (some times about a page without interruption) when their content is critical of the values and practices of the nobility. Such is the case when Gudu Kāsā criticizes Mashashā's contempt for non-aristocrats and his injustices against the peasants. Such speech-making also occurs when the old peasant and Ākālu indict Mashāshā for making excessive demands from the peasants. Although Mashashā is by nature given to interrupting those who express views disagreeable to him, the author restrains him on such occasions. The other characters, too, are made to listen intently to such lengthy speeches, thereby signalling to the reader their thematic significance.

The narrator does not provide direct quotations of the thoughts of Mashashā, Gudu Kāsā, and Ābajja Balaw. Nor are these characters given to meditation. The two characters whose thoughts are frequently quoted are Bogāla and his son Bazzābeh. What is directly given as thought generally has some bearing on the thinking character's immediate situation.

Whenever thought is quoted, it is presented in conventional syntax, with little or no interruption in the logical flow of the ideas. On some occasions, as in the following passage, the rhetorical organization becomes so pronounced that it looks more like a prepared speech than spontaneous thought:

Whenever Bogāla put on the barnos [coarse woolen frock] and other garments that were bought with the money his son earned by conducting church services, he would recall his opposition to his wife's plan to send [Bazzābeh] to school and say to [himself]:

"Have I been mistaken ? I have certainly been mistaken in prefering his becoming a shepherd rather than a student. Which shepherd has been able to support his parents as much as my son? ... I now realize that it was just as well that he did not become a shepherd. But what I don't understand is the other aspect." When he thought that the son who was doing all this for him would never become a father, his heart would be filled with grief. The thought of his son not sharing the pleasures of this world apart from its sufferings would make him regretful. When this thought came to his mind he would feel that even if he were to cover him from head to feet with gold, let alone with barnos, his happiness would never be complete.

"I can rely on him when I become weaker in my old age. But who will support him when he, too, becomes old? What can substitute the joy one derives from seeing one's son begetting a child and one's plant bearing fruit? A farmer sows seed and as the shoots begin to sprout and blossom, his joy, too, grows likewise. While he is thus eagerly waiting for the yield, if some one ominously predicts to him that his plants would wither away without bearing fruit, how much aggrieved would he be! Wouldn't this bad news rend his heart assunder? I, too, am like this farmer. I begot a son and became happy. I had hoped that he would marry and beget children. But this mother of his, this prophet of omens, crushed my hopes by giving him away to the tābots. I would rather he were a shepherd or something else rather this! I would rather forego his help!" he would say and indignantly throw away his barnos.

(pp.40-41)

From the narrator's introductory statement in the above passage, it is apparent that the thought occurs to Bogāla repeatedly, "whenever he put on the barnos...." Since Bogāla's poverty and his opposition to the consecration of his son have earlier been shown, his having mixed feelings about its material benefits would not be unusual. But the recurrence of the conflicting thoughts in exactly the same form, as given within the quotation marks, would be unlikely. The wording and the order of the ideas, for instance, are bound to be altered from one occasion to another occasion. Apart from this, as Bogāla was acutely aware of what his son's consecration would mean to him, his mind would be unlikely to resort to analogies to illucidate to itself the negative consequences of this consecration. The analogy of the farmer would be plausible if Bogāla were preparing to persuade or was in the process of arguing with another person who is not ready to accept his views. But Bogāla has no such auditor in the present context.

Unlike the preceding example, there are instances when the internal organization and substance of the thought do not suggest an external auditor. In the following case, the thought is still accompanied by the narrator's interpretive comments, but the thinker does not appear to be addressing another person. Although the sentences are in conventional syntax, the dots may have been meant to suggest her hesitations as she weighs her words. The background situation here is Bazzābeh's discontinuation of his tutoring when Mashashā gets angry with him for informally addressing her. She is now worried that he may withdraw altogether:

> "Could he have decided to leave? If only he would come just once! I would tell him not to go until I complete Qeddāsē Māryām. But how would I put it to him? Please...stay...at least until I complete my lessons! No! 'at least' would make him think that I want him to be with me.... Please don't go before I complete my lessons.... This is better!" said Sabla after her difficulty in choosing the best

way to ask him not to leave her, without yet revealing her [true intentions].

(p.208)

While direct quotation is the more frequently used method of presenting consciousness, there are also some instances of presentation in the indirect free style. Ālaqā Sergaw's thoughts, for instance, are presented in this way. After Bazzābeh arrives in Addis Ababa, he is introduced to Ālaqā Sergaw, who is the head of St Raphael's Church. He offers the priest some bribe and the latter gives him the post of Qenē teacher in the church's school. Soon after Bazzābeh begins work, news of his being a graduate of the famous Qenē school of Ālaqā Kenfu spreads in Addis Ababa. The heads of the wealthier churches approach him with offers of a better pay to lure him to their schools. It is at this point that Ālaqā Sergaw devises his own scheme to beat the competition of rival clergymen. (I have underlined those statements which are not in the mode of the indirect free style.)

He knew that whatever pay increase he might make, he could not compete with the heads of the wealthy churches that could afford to pay more. So he must find something greater than the highest pay offer. Sa'ādā Sergaw was undoubtedly superior to any pay that all the churches of Addis Ababa could offer together! Sa'ādā was Ālaqā Sergaw's first and last child. She had been divorced three weeks after her wedding ...[and was now looking after her divorced father]. If Bazzābeh was offered Sa'ādā's hand in marriage and became Ālaqā Sergaw's son-in-law, it was obvious that he would never think of finding an offer that would surpass this. After that St Raphael would become a renowned centre from which [prospective] Qenē teachers coming from Addis Ababa or other places would graduate! Every one would say, "Long live Ālaqā Sergaw!He raised St Raphael from where it had fallen and made it the centre where the scholars competed in their Qenē

compositions. He made what was inferior to others now the best of all!" After that, even if he were not to get a new promotion, this amazing achievement would be his guarantee against being removed from his present post. To prevent people from saying that he gave his daughter to a nameless Qenē teacher, he would tell His Majesty that Bazzābeh was his son-in-law and a master of Qenē. His Majesty would then reward Bazzābeh and give him a new appointment on top of his present post. In this way, both his own and his daughter's interest would be protected. What is reprehensible in the eyes of Man and God was self-promotion at the expense of others, not serving one's interest by benefitting others. Yes, neither from St George nor from any other church could he get a better offer that would induce him to turn down such an honour, such a gift of God! This is his means for beating his rivals. So he must do just this.

(pp.459-460)

In the above passage, although the words are the narrator's the point of view is the thinking character's. Ālaqā Sergaw is unaware of Bazzābeh's primary motive in applying for the job. But the reader knows that Bazzābeh wants the job because he is planning to start a new life with his future wife Sabla Wangēl. The reader also knows that Bazzābeh has vowed not to marry anyone other than Sabla Wangēl, and he has made this clear to Gudu Kāsā when the latter advised him to find some other woman. The clergyman's scheme and fantasy thus become ironic. This effect is reinforced also by the omniscient narrator's remark at the end of the report: "And indeed, who would not be overjoyed when such a gift of God suddenly comes to him out of the blue?" (p.460) Like most of the presentations of consciousness, however, the above depiction is plot-centered and paves the way for Sa'ādā's later attempt to seduce Bazzābeh. Another such purposive depiction of consciousness comes in the form of dreams. These occur immediately before some crucial event or a period of crisis.

After Bazzābeh runs away from home he wanders aimlessly for five years and in the sixth year he is visited by Dabtarā Bayyana from Mānkussā. Bazzābeh is very anxious to know about the well-being of his parents, but he is also afraid to ask directly about them. So, he tries to make the conversation dwell on the subject of Mānkussā and indirectly find out about them. But Bayyana deliberately switches to some other subject. After many attepts, Bazzābeh begins to suspect that Bayyana's evasiveness is because he has brought him bad news about them. Bazzābeh passes a sleepless night and around dawn sees the following dream:

> ... his legs were tied to a tree and he was struggling hard to break loose and walk away. When he was about to fall down, a dove took off from the crown of the church of Mānkussā, flew around and them perched on the tree to which he was fastened. The dove then gently cut off the rope and buried it in front of him. Then it said: "The rope with which you have been tied is now broken and buried. From now on you can go wherever you like."
>
> (p.63)

The moment the dove utters these words, Bazzābeh wakes up and tries to interpret the meaning of the dream. When Bayyana learns that Bazzābeh is awake (and not "a few days later" as Kane maintains, p.216), he breaks to him the news of his parents' death.

As the reader is already aware of their death, the dream does not foreshadow[5] for him a forthcoming event. Nor does it signal to Bazzābeh an event which he has not anticipated. Bayyana's persistent evasion of his questions has aroused his suspicion that something is wrong with his parents. The reason why he constantly gets up from bed during that night is because he thinks that the sounds he hears are made by Bayyana as he prepares to break to him the news of their death. The prime importance of the dream does not lie in its validation of Bazzābeh's suspicion but

rather in its signifying for him his release from the vow that consecrated him to the church for the rest of his life. Both the dove and Bayyana are messengers of some news. But what Bayyana has brought is a distressing news of death. That is why he is reluctant to convey it right away. The dove, however, has no such bad news to convey, for the Biblical allusion would otherwise be destroyed. It heralds to him the end of his bondage. The fact that it takes off from the crown of the very church to which he has been consecrated, and liberates him from his fetters links the dream with his mother's vow. The breaking and burial of the rope seems to present the death of the parents as the removal of the obstacles that prevent him from leading a life of his choice. After he receives the news he himself regards their death in this positive light: "From now on, there would be nothing to prevent him from going wherever he liked and leading the life he chose. From now on, he could go where he would not be recognized, get married without fear of being reproached and settle down" (pp.63-64). Although contradictory explanations are given regarding his exact motive for running away from home (for instance, to punish his parents for consecrating him or to get married and live as he liked), there is no ambiguity about his strong desire to be freed from this bondage. Thus even before he runs away from home, he says to himself: "I know that there are other people who lead the kind of life that has been set for me. But that must be because they chose it. If others imposed it on them, then that was not fair. Anyway, I won't choose it and I don't want to live it" (p.46). Until the time of his meeting with Bayyana, therefore, Bazzābeh was harbouring deep in his heart a resentment against his parents. Bayyana's evasiveness about their well-being seems to have triggered in Bazzābeh's mind the vision of his release from the bondage. The dream appears to be an outlet for giving expression to his strong desire for such a liberation. So, when the news is broken to him, his reaction is one of great relief rather than deep sorrow: "In fact, he became very happy" says the narrator (p.63).

Despite his new consolation, fear of the potency of his

mother's vow begins to nag his mind: "Now that he had got his liberty, he could go anywhere and live as he liked. What about God? What about the tābots? 'Ahhh!... God knows about that!'" (p.65) This fear continues to haunt him later on and strikes a discordant note which gradually eclipses the optimistic predictions of the dream, thereby generating a tension of its own.

III

For a novel with such a large number of characters, there are too few descriptions of physical appearance. The few who have been described with varying degrees of vividness are Mahsashā, Bazzābeh, Ābbā Takla Hāymānot (among the male characters), Enqopā, Yasarrāsh, Sa'ādā, Sabla Wangēl, and the lady in Bazzābeh's anecdote (among the female characters). But the vividness of the descriptive details does not seem to correspond to the significance of the character's role. A nameless minor character that appears in a humorous anecdote, for instance, is described in such concrete terms as:"light-brown complexion", "a cascade of hair as soft as silk", "thinly pencilled eyebrows and eyelashes", "neck decorated with tatoos", "legs adorned with anklets", "dress wide open at the neck" (pp.188-189). Another minor character that appears just once, Sa'ādā, is also described with similar vividness: she is "slim and tall, with with a narrow face, big round eyes,a nose straight at the top and slightly flat at the tip, small lips, and tiny teeth that look like a row of diamonds" (p.464). In the description of Sabla Wangēl, however, the details are too general to vividly paint her exaggerated beauty. When she is first introduced, the narrator describes her as: "neither tall nor short, neither skiny nor fat, but of a medium build," "a lovely girl with a good complexion" (p.84). In the last but two chapters where she is presented as the monk Ābbā Ālam Lamenē, she is described as having "hair that looks like a skein of silk", "blooming lips", "well-shaped legs" (p.493). Bazzābeh, too, is only sketchily described earlier when we are told that his teeth are spaced out and

that dimples form on his cheeks when he laughs. Apart from this, we are told very little about what he looks like until the last chapter where we learn from Sabla Wangel's fantasy that he is short and slim, with a light-brown complexion and soft hair. In the case of Fitāwrāri Mashashā, the features that are repeatedly cited are his blood-shot eyes and swollen blood vessels on his temples, which are the physical signs of his rage. Occasionally, his long beard and grey hair are mentioned. The one time when his attire is described in some detail is when he goes to the place of the duel. The scare-crow image of Ābbā Takla Hāymānot is more memorable than is Bazzābeh's physical appearance.

In the description of physical setting,[6] too, the emphasis does not seem to be placed on the main centres of interest. The houses in Ālaqā Kenfu's Qenē school, for instance, are described with greater detail than are those in Mashashā's compound. Although a considerable proportion of the story is presented in dialogic scenes set indoors, descriptions of interiors are few.

Humour is one of the important elements which enhance the flavour of the story. Humour is presented in different forms and in various parts of the story. When Weddenash and Bogāla heatedly argue over whether or not they should get the vow revoked by paying some money to the church in exchange for their son's release from the bondage, the former cites the case of Ewnatu to prove her point. Ewnatu loses his ox and makes a pledge to St Michael. When he comes out of the church, he finds his ox grazing in the churchyard. Regreting the pledge he has just made, he goes back to tell St Michael not to bother looking for the ox. When he comes out, however, he finds his ox being attacked by hyenas. So he rushes back again to reassure St Michael that he will bring him the incense he has pledged if he saves his ox now. But St Michael replies by telling him that he is not in the habit of taking back what he has already given. Apart from illucidating the woman's point, this anecdote eases the tension that has been building up in the course of the couple's arguments. The gossips, the pidgin Amharic of Lekurā Bahullu and Gudatā, and the care-

free manners of Hābtesh Yemar also add spice to the story. Apart from these, there are also comic scenes such as Tawābach's attempt to forcibly seduce Bazzābeh and the chaos inside the hall where the royal banquet is held. In each instance, the humour is intrinsic to the very nature of the situation and not an external embellishment.

Unlike the previous novels, this work contains many passages of verse. Some of the poems are as long as four pages and some no more than four lines. The shorter ones like those improvised by Bazzābeh in honour of Mashashā and his wife, and the funeral dirge are the best poetic pieces in the novel. Some of the poems such as the ones extolling the exploits of Mashashā and Ābajja are too lengthy to be taken as oral compostions. Nor is it common practice for oral poets to develop a single theme, as in the ballad-like allegory of the lion versus the leopard, in as many as thirty lines.

The language of this novel is, on the whole, lucid. It is spiced with proverbs and the kind of apt expressions that Mashashā uses to characterize other people. The narrator frequently resorts to parallel constructions of phrases and subordinate clauses. Complex and compound-complex sentences of three to four lines are typical of the language of narration. But in some instances, the length of the sentences becomes so unwieldy that they hinder the reader's smooth progress. There are sentences with as many as over a hundred words (as in the sentence on p.197, which has one hundred forty two words in twenty lines, and the sentence on p.299, which has one hundred and two words in eighteen lines).

Notes and References

1. The plot does not follow "a single track" as Āsfāw Dāmtē maintains in his article: "Modern Amharic Literature", Yekatit, 5, no.2 (1981) (16-18), p.18. After Bazzābeh and Sabla Wangēl establish their relationship, the story's

line of development branches out more than once. In the first instance, the focus rhythmically alternates between the young couple's love relationship and Mashashā's dispute with the peasants. Although the story lines converge again with the return of Mashashā, the branching out occurs again when Bazzābeh goes to Addis Ababa. The focus is fixed on him until his disappearance from there, and then shifts to Sabla Wangēl.

2. In his review of this novel in Weyeyet, 2, no.1 (1961 E.C.) (83-92), Sāhla Sellāsē Berhāna Māryām says: "Her being disguised as a monk so as not to be recognized by ... Mashashā and the servants is very good. But I think that it would have been better if the reader had been immediately told that Ābbā Ālam Lamenē was Sabla Wangēl. Because this information is not disclosed earier, the reader remains confused for a long time" (p.86). But even without the narrator's explicitly indicating the true identity of the monk, the reader would be able to tell who the disguised person is. In the first place, no monk by the name of Ābbā Ālam Lamenē has appeared in the previous chapters. Nor has the narrator introduced a new character in this way before. Besides, as her elopement has already been disclosed and a hint given when the drunken Ābbā Takla Hāymānot asks her whether he should take off his dabalo, the reader can easily know that the traveller in the dabalo is Sabla Wangēl herself. Furthermore, this Ābbā Ālam Lamenē is reported to have travelled for one day and two nights without food and is obviously not used to making long journeys. Apart from this, the description of the monk's hair, lips, fingers, and legs would be inappropriate for a man's physique. From these clues the true identity of the monk can easily be inferred from the report within the first two pages of his appearance on the scene.

3. In the countryside, traders transport their merchandise using draught animals. The (leather) straps are used for fastening the article on the back of the animal. In the process of loading, the trader can hold part of the

strap between his teeth while pulling the other end with his hands in order to tighten the knot. It is this practice that Mashashā is derogetorily alluding to.

4. In his review article cited earlier, Sāhla Sellāsē says: "The style of presentation follows the dramatic method. The author prepares the stage and then makes the characters engage in dialogues. We know about the personality of a character through his speech and what others comment about him, and not through the author's comments about his traits" (p.87). It is true that dialogue is one major means of delineating character. But narratorial commentary, too, is used for naming the traits as in the characterization of Bogāla (pp.20-21), Sabla Wangēl (p.84), Ābbā Mogasē (p.111), Gudu Kāsā (p.123), and Āsagē (p.133). Dramatization and commentary are used alternately as supplements to one another, but with no consistency in the order of their presentation. Mashashā's vanity, for instance, is first dramatized by way of his contrasting reactions to Bazzābeh's poetic improvisations during the festival of Takla Ālfā'ā. Following this scene the narrator comments, "Fitāwrāri Mashashā was a nobleman who was excessively proud of his aristocratic lineage" (p.85). In the case of Sabla Wangēl, however, the commentary on her trait comes even before she appears on the scene in person: "... as she was very modest, she hated the snobbery of her parents and was by nature completely different from them" (p.84).

5. Commenting on this dream, Thomas Kane says: "Since this fact is already known to the reader the introduction of the dream is not a device for letting the reader in on future events as it is with less sophisticated works" (p.216, emphasis mine). Kane seems to have overlooked the presence of a second dream, Sabla Wangēl's, which is effectively used asaforeshadowing device. Her dream occurs when the couple are making their hectic preparations to elope before Mashashā returns home. She dreams that she is abandoned half-way up a precipice. She grabs the soil and rocks to climb up to safety, but they are too loose and bring her

rolling down. She tries again, but fails. After many frantic attempts she succeeds in reaching just near the edge of the the precipice where she desperately holds onto a tuft of grass. But she wakes up before she knows whether or not she has completely escaped to safety, and this ambiguous ending of the dream serves to heighten the suspense by overshadowing the fate of their attempts to elope. Bazzābeh takes the dream as a bad omen, but tries to console her by ironically describing the tuft of grass as "a strong object". However, their worst fears come true when Mashashā aborts their plan. Her final reunion with Bazzābeh, too, has some parallels with the dream. Just like the tuft of grass she desperately hangs onto, she tries to save his life by nursing him tenderly. But her efforts fail and he dies on the day after their marriage. Unlike Gabreyyē's dream in Ya-Tēwodros Enbā, this one is subtler in its foreshadowing, for its ending is not so conclusive.

6. A perceptive analysis of some of the descriptive passages in this novel is found in Dāññāchaw Worqu's article, "Ya-sena Tebab Hā-hu" Addis Zaman, 22 Hāmlē 1963 B.C.

Chapter Eight

ĀDAFRES

I

Unlike its predecessors, this novel presents its story predominantly in dramatized forms, as there are few passages of narration proper. Although the authorial narrator makes a few obliquely evalutive comments on the personality of some of the characters, he is reserved from making any didactic generalizations. He does not explain or name the underlying meanings of the events. Even on those few occasions when he presents a summary of some of the events, he tries to distance himself from the story. Hence, the reader does not get from him the kind of overt guidance which the narrators in Ār'āyā and Feqer Eska Maqāber provide through their extensive commentaries. The reader is therefore forced to read between the lines and draw inferences from the structural patterns in order to understand the views of the implied author. The characters are most of the time engaged in dialogues. What little action there is is subordinated to the depiction of character and the day-to-day life. As the portrayal is geared towards creating the impression of a society gripped by lethargy, the situations depicted are generally static. For this reason, the story moves at a very slow pace, gathering momentum only after the second half of the novel.

The use of dialogic scenes as the main means of presenting a story is not a widely seen method in Amharic prose fiction. Consequently its application in Ādafres seems to have led to a confusion in its reception by some commentators. Feqrē Tolosā, for instance, denies the very presence of a story when he asserts: "If a plot is to be defined as a sequence of events which make up a story, there is hardly a plot in Adefres. However, one cannot deny that there are isolated occurrences however far these... may be from making up a story as such" (p.226). According to Sāhla

Sellāsē Berhāna Māryām, the novel has neither a story nor a unified theme:

> There is no central theme on which the attention of the reader can dwell as in conventional novels. There is no development of a story as such, because there is no story in the first place. The whole book is about the various aspects of traditional values and customs. The characters are eternally arguing about the pros and cons of Ethiopian culture.
>
> What keeps the unity of the book if there is no story in it? That is the enigmatic part of Daniachew's style. He writes a novel without a story and successfully leads the reader to go on reading from the opening to the closing chapter. I think the secret lies in Daniachew's powerful descriptive ability and in his characterization.[1]

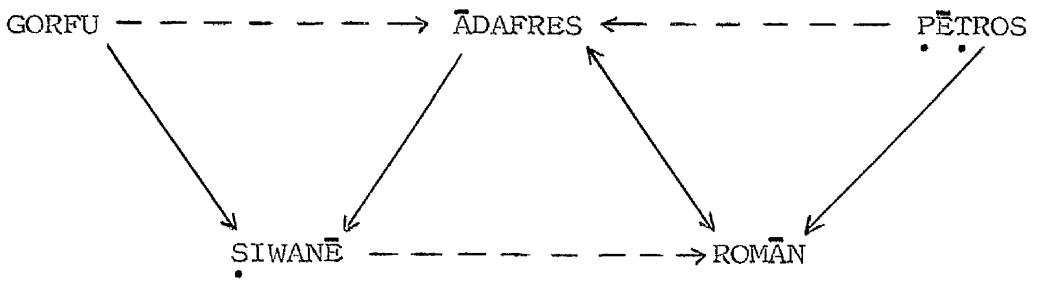
But no novel can be written without a story, for otherwise it wouldn't be a novel, and Ādafres is no exception. It is based on a coherent story which serves as the framework for painting a complex picture of a society that persists in resisting change.

The story begins in the hamlet of Ārmānyā, where Wayzaro Āsaggāsh, a wealthy widow, lives with her daughter Ṣiwanē, her business manager Pēṭros, the supervisor of her tenants Wardofā, and his daughter Romān. Ṣiwanē left school before finishing the eigth grade. Ābbā Āddisē, her mother's father-confessor, took her love of music as a sign of her being possessed by Lēgēwon, the devil of adultery, and so persuaded her mother to withdraw her from school. Romān is uneducated and is engaged to a man she has never seen before. But as she doesn't want to marry this man she has decided to run away from home before the wedding. Pēṭros has promised her to take her to Asmara. Siwanē is courted by Gorfu, her former classmate and the son of a feudal lord who is Āsaggāsh's friend. He discontinued his studies of his own free will while he was a sixth-grade student. It is his intention to marry Ṣiwanē with the consent of her

mother, or failing in that, by abducting her. But Siwanē misunderstands his feelings for her. Her affection for him is that of a sister and she assumes that his love too is nothing but brotherly. She also regards his rural manners as rather crude.

Wayzaro Āsaggāsh has been in the habit of inviting to her house the judges who are sent from Addis Ababa to work in Dabra Sinā during the rainy season. She contacts them through her half-brother Āto Waldu, who is a wealthy merchant living in Dabra Sinā. He has been in the habit of helping the judges by providing them with lodging or renting them one when they come with their families. The judges are sent here so as to enable the peasants to devote their time to their farm work during the dry season instead of abandoning it to attend to their litigations in the courts of Addis Ababa. This rainy season, it is the high court judge Āto Teso who has been sent to Dabra Sinā. He is accompanied by his daughter Frēwwā, his sister Wayzaro Ākalāt, her housemaid Āttāhu Warotā, her son Ādafres, and his artist friend, the French-educated Kebrat. Young Ādafres is a third-year university student who has been assigned to teach in Dabra Sinā for his one-year national service. He has come at this time so as to familiarize himself with the local situation before school opens.

Before the guests go to Ārmānyā, a love relationship develops among three young characters in Dabra Sinā. From what the gossip Āttāhu Warotā reports to her mistress, we learn that Kebrat has gone to the extent of proposing to Frēwwā. From the letter that Frēwwā reads near the brook, we come to know that Balāy, Waldu's son, is also in love with her. This triangular love relationship is apparently the precursor of the more complicated relationship that Ādafres enters into when he goes to Ārmānyā with the other guests. His situation can be diagrammatically represented as follows. (Note that the broken line stands for the feeling of jealousy and the solid one for the feeling of love for the person to whom the arrow points. Where the arrow points both ways, it means that that feeling is shared at one stage.)



Being educated, eloquent, and skillful in playing his accordion, Ādafres easily attracts these country girls. But his heart is also divided between the two. When Romān tells him her plan to run away from home, he advises her to go to Addis Ababa where he promises to find her a job. One day, he finds her fetching water from the pond. While fondling her breasts, he is seen by Pētros, who immediately reports this to Ṣiwanē and Wardofā. Ṣiwanē witnesses this and then returns home. When Romān fetches the water for the third time and heads towards her home, Pētros, hiding behind a bush, throws a stone at her and breaks on her back her water-pot. When Ādafres sees her soaked in water and tries to console her, a torrent of blows suddenly rains on him and he collapses. Wardofā and the other assailants assume that he was about to rape Romān. Ādafres is thus disgraced in the eyes of Āsaggāsh and the other people. To make it difficult for him to stay any longer in her home, and also to get a cure for her rheumatism in the hot springs of Robi, Āsaggāsh takes Ṣiwanē, Romān, and Gorfu with her and goes on a short trip.

Ādafres returns to Dabra Sinā and soon begins his teaching. His uncle finishes his work and returns to Addis Ababa with Frēwwā, Ākalāt, and the housemaid. Kebrat stays behind with Ādafres. Meanwhile, in Robi, Gorfu proposes to Ṣiwanē but fails to get her consent. He tries to abduct her and again fails. When they return to Ārmānyā the preparation for Romān's wedding begins. As Pētros wavers about taking her to Asmara, Romān runs away to Dabra Sinā and becomes a bar girl. Gorfu sends mediators to Āsaggāsh to apologise for his conduct and to formally request for Ṣiwanē's hand. As she does not want to marry Gorfu, Ṣiwanē runs away to Dabra Sinā. She contacts Ādafres and tells him

her desire to live with him. He tells her that he has no intention of marrying anyone and advises her to go back to Ārmānyā. When she comes out of the house she finds her mother, Waldu, and some policemen outside. Ādafres is taken to the police station and charged with seducing an engaged girl into eloping and with violating her honour. Although still a virgin, Ṣiwanē defends Ādafres by claiming that she was deflowered by Lēgēwon in the bushes of Ārmānyā. Shocked by this admission, Āsaggāsh disowns her daughter and returns to Ārmānyā. Ādafres is set free, but he takes Ṣiwanē's statement literally and gets angry with her. For nearly a year, she stays with her uncle and waits for Ādafres to change his mind and accept her. Meanwhile, he has been rejoined not only with his mother and her housemaid but also with Romān, whom he keeps as his mistress. Ṣiwanē learns of this and burns with jealousy. One day, Ādafres and Kabrat try to stop the violence by demonstrating students. Gorfu, who has been driven by his frustration into joining the army, is also on the scene trying to restore order with his colleagues. Ādafres is struck by stones and dies a few hours later. Gorfu and Ṣiwanē meet during Ādafres' funeral. He tries to impress her with his promotion to the rank of second corporal, but again fails. The story ends ambiguously, with Ṣiwanē abruptly walking away from the funeral place towards the church of St Mary.

II

The above summary of the story reduces the novel to an ordinary narrative of love, as it does not show from what perspective the plot is constructed. In the actual portrayal, however, the reader is subtly introduced with the thematic framework of the novel at the very beginning of Chapter One, in an impressionistic description. This interesting passage, given below, is instructive of the author's subtle methods of suggesting meaning even through the structure of the text and hence worth examining in some detail. (Note that wherever it is possible to render

it intelligibilly in an English translation, I have tried to retain the author's style in the application of dots, dashes, and quotation marks, for these are essential parts of his innovative techniques.)

> Sticking her head out, Qundi looks like an outpost sentry on duty. With their chests exposed to the sun, the streams of Āwwādi and Jawehā are sparkling. The plain seen below, where the sky and the earth seem to converge and where life seems to be drowsing, is covered with dust. In every dell and valley, every escarpment and gorge __ Gurj, Waf Wāshā, Wānzābarat, Jānāborē, Yaltoki, Matti, Dyāwdyāmbā, Āwwādi, Ċhanno, Āgāmbar, Wāyyelo, Dabra Sinā, Ārmānyā, Sharashar, Wayn Wehā, Mānyāmbā, Ābdillāq, Māfud, Geldimā, Kāsē Āgar, Rāssā, Mazazo, Āyyābar, Qawwāt, Wājā, Ṭamāmit, Shotal Āmbā ... on every hill __ Geft Mikā'ēl, Gurj Mikā'ēl, Wānzābarat Mikā'ēl, Doqāqit Mikā'ēl, Sārāmbā Mikā'ēl, Rāmsē Mikā'ēl, Mānyāmbā Mikā'ēl, Yaltoki Mikā'ēl, Wāyyelo Mikā'ēl, Hārāmbā Mikā'ēl, Māfud Mikā'ēl, Wājā Mikā'ēl ... from the top of Ṭārmābar Mountain when one sees the terrain in the sub-province of Yefāt and Ṭemmugā, it looks like the store where God dumped the junk that was left over when He completed creating the rest of the world. The valleys, the hills, the massifs, the fog, the dust have smothered life and she is sleeping. That life which is hustling, bubbling, glowing in other countries is here reposing __ gently, slowly, humming, like the the ripple of water in a swampy field ... Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday ... Ledatā __ (Rāgu'ēl) __ Ābbā Gubbā __ Ba'ātā __ John son of the Thunderbolt __ Ābuyē the Just __ Jesus Christ __ Trinity __ the Four Beasts __ Thomas the Martyr __ the Cross of Jesus __ St Hanna __ St Michael __ God the Father __ (Raphael) __ Bishop Āragāwi __ (Gabra Krestos) __ Cyriacus the Child __ Covenant of Mercy __ Stephen Protomartyr __ Eusthathius the Just __ Gabriel __ Hensatā __ Mary __ Apostles __ George __ Takla

Hāymānot __ Mercurius __ Joseph __ the Redeemer of the World __ Emmanuel __ the Nativity __ St Mark __ Damarā __ the Holy Cross __ St John __ Christmas __ Epiphany __ Easter __ flows __ hums life, like the ripple of water in a swampy field ... by defecating __ taking fresh air __ digesting __ swallowing __ masticating __ munching __ putting into the mouth __ by baking __ kneading __ grinding __ pulverizing __ by building granaries __ hollowing __ loading __ threshing __ stacking __ mowing __ weeding __ hoeing __ grubbing __ furrowing __ ploughing __ by fencing __ clearing __ by taking out the cattle for grazing __ fetching their fodder for the night __ collecting firewood in the evening, passes, flows, hums life, like the ripple of water in a swampy field. With Easter __ Felsatā __ Gād __ Fast of Nineveh __ Lent __ Fast of the Apostles __ Friday and Wednesday, life is enticed and weakend ... with tānnāsh __ (shulludā) __ tāllāq __ Cheqennā __ (sabrādā) __ shent __ frembā __ mahāl āgadā __ (muscle) __ warch __ (nabro) __ goden tadābit __ (bēta sālegañ) __ tongue and spleen __ heart __ liver __ kidney __ stomach __ tripe __ qenettābi __ with white tēf __ black tēf __ black tēf __ white tēf __ millet __ sorghum __ white millet __ broad bean __ chickpea __ with qay wat __ āllechā __ āllechā __ berz __ tallā __ qerrāri __ she is again filled to the brim __ flows __ flows __ flows __ hums life, like the ripple of water in a swampy field. Ēzānā __ Zarā Yā'eqob __ Susnyos __ Āmmehāyyas __ Ābbeyyē __ Masāfent __ Yohānnes __ Tēwodros __ Menilek __ leaves behind her silt __ Āzbetē __ Chāltu __ Lappēsā __ Gonnetē __ Hādās __ Qamaru __ Āzālach __ Wardofā __ Āryām __ Chābbudē __ Āyyāntu __ Gabrē __ Tawābach __ Nasru __ Magartu __ Birrātu __ Latamikā'ēl __ Ergatē __ Āyyāntu __ Hāgos __ pond __ dip __ dip __ pond __ dam __ dam __ dip __ well __ pond __ dam __ dyke __ water course __ gently __ slowly __ flows __ this same life which in other countries is hustling __ bubbling __ glowing.

The foregoing description paints a panoramic picture of the landscape as seen by the narrator from the height of Tārmābar Mountain. It begins by highlighting the ruggedness of the terrain in the sub-province of Yefāt and Temmugā. The list of place names creates a sense of bulk and weight which lends physical volume to the mode of life subsequently outlined. Apart from the sparkle of the streams, the scenery appears as dull as junk would be __ dust-ladden and disorderly. After the list of place names, there is an indication of the impact of the natural environment on the life of the local people. With this transition, the focus shifts from the landscape to the pace of life. First, the slow march of time is suggested by chronologically listing a few days of the week, then the names of angels and saints as well as the religious events commemorated from the first to the thirtieth day of the month (from "Ledatā" to "St Mark"), and the major Christian holidays (from fesival of "the Holy Cross" to "Easter"). The march of time is thus marked by the progression from day to week, from week to month, from month to year, and even from the old year to the new year (for "St John" marks the beginning of the new year). The details of time are set off from the subsequent details by the motif: "flows __ hums life, like the ripple of water in a swampy field." Unlike the preceding details, those listed under the process of feeding, preparing food, and farming are given in a more or less reverse order to create the impression of a stagnating life. The list of preoccupations for sustaining life is then rounded off with the same motif before the shift to the spiritual aspect of life. The series of fasts with which the body is subdued are followed by details of the ingredients of the feasts with which the fasts are broken __ i.e., the main cuts of beef (from "tānnāsh" to"qenettābi"), grain types (from "white tēf" to "chickpea"), stew types ("qay wat" and "ālechā"), and drinks ("taj" to "qerrāri"). The movement of time is again marked by the more or less chronological list of Ethiopian monarchs and other historical personalities ("Ēzānā" to "Menilek"). As the river of History flows, it leaves behind its "silt" __ the masses of the various

nationalities. These are represented by the names of Oromos (Chāltu, Birrātu), Tegreans (Hādās, Hāgos), Gurāgēs (Qamaru), and Amharas (Āzālāch, Ergatē).

As indicated above, the catalogue of names, periodic events, routine activities, and dietary items goes beyond merely enumerating facts about the geographic and cultural setting of the story. The fictional events occur in three small areas: Ārmānyā, Dabra Sinā, and Robi. But the pattern of life outlined in the descriptive passage is not restricted to just these localities. There are a number of elements which extend the representation to Ethiopia as a whole: the ruggedness of the terrain, the dominance of religion, the pastoral way of life, the national (historical) figures, and the motif contrasting the state of life here with that in "other countries". The style of the naming of places is also one element shared with other parts of the country. Dabra Sinā, for instance, is named after a place associated with the Christian religion, as are Dabra Tābor in Gojjām and Nazreth in Shawā.

Life in this region, as in most other parts of the country, is dominated by religion, here represented by Christianity (the religion favoured by the State). Its influences are implied by the number of religious references, as in the list of hills (all identified by the name of the church built on them __ St Michael's), the traditional calendar of the month, the major holidays and fasts. It may be worth noting here that in some parts of the Christian highland, it was not unusual then for the devout to totally abstain from physical labour on the day of a patron saint. The higher the number of such commemorations (the Ethiopian Synaxarium[2] in fact lists commemorations for all the days of the year), the lesser the number of workdays. And the fast of the religious zealots was often too rigorous for them to engage with full energy in their farm work. Within this context, the significance of the list of fasts, raw meat, and drinks is to heighten the impression of sluggishness by contrasting extremes of abstinence (from food) and feasting.

The order of most of the events shows the forward march of time, even if slowly. But in contrast to this, both the periodic events (holidays, fasts) and the routine

activities (feeding, tending the cattle, farming) are cyclical and show no progressive change or growth along with the march of time. Repetition here plays a vital role in underlining the dominant theme of the passage and, by extension, of the novel. "white tēf" and "black tēf" (grain), "qay wat" and "allechā" (stew), for instance, are each repeated twice. Despite their outward (colour) differences, as they are similar in nature, their repetition emphasizes this sameness so as to accentuate the monotony of the larger item __ life. In the same pattern, life is twice described as being in a state of sleep. And the analogic motif __ "flows __ hums life, like the ripple of water in a swampy field" __ is repeated four times. Apart from acting as a refrain in the rhythmic flow of the referential details, this motif gives the whole description a thematic unity by stressing the state of lethargy in the various spheres of life. The other vital motif is the one which appears first at the point where the link between the physical environment and social life is made, and later at the end of the passage. This motif is contrastive: whereas life in "other countries is hustling, bubbling, glowing," here in Ethiopia, she is (ripple or no) "drowsing", "sleeping","reposing". This state of inertia is suggested to be perpetuated by the isolation from those "other countries". While arguing against the penetration of Western influences, Teso says: "Just as it was her mountains and gorges, religion and resoluteness that had protected ancient Ethiopia against the aggression of its enemies, now it is her ignorance and ideology, imbued with the traditional spirit, that are struggling to save her from the modern invaders of personality" (p.228). It is this protectionist role that is alluded to in the likening of Qundi to "an outpost sentry on duty". The element of isolation can also be sensed in the characterization of the plain as a place "where the sky and the earth seem to converge," thus shutting out the rest of the world lying beyond the horizon. The effect of this enclosure can be inferred from the statement: " The valleys, the hills, the massifs, the fog, the dust have smothered life and she is sleeping." It is after citing this stifling effect of physical containment

that the dormancy of life in Ethiopia is contrasted with the dynamism of life elsewhere.

The various hollows (pond, well, dam) listed immediately after the names of the people are used to give weight to the dominant impression of torpor already evoked by the preceding referential details. Despite differences in size and shape, most of the hollows have in common the property of arresting the flow of water. The association of the hollows with immobility and decadence (since stagnant water tends to stink) is thematically vital. By the principle of association through physical contiguity, the likeness of the hollows (here emphasized by the repetion of some of them) stands in analogic relationship with the quality of life led by the various nationalities. Given the characterization of the latter as the "silt" left behind by the forward progression (or "flow") of time (or History), the extension of the negative quality of the hollows (stagnation) to the life of the people becomes a logical and necessary act of inferential reading.

The passage evokes a sense of monotony and retarded movement by the structure of its language, too. The two-page long passage is given in a single paragraph. Most of the sentences are also lengthy and chopped into a series of short phrases and/or single nouns which make their flow jerky. Apart from the occasional inversions, the punctuation (particularly the dash) forces the reader to pause constantly as he takes in the staccato phrases, thereby making the the retarded pace of the reading process correspond to the slow pace of the life being depicted.

In these ways, the description sets forth the very thematic groundwork on which the story is built. It paints a panoramic picture of a traditional society whose life is pervaded by stagnation. Immediately after this opening passage, the focus shifts from a general exposition to a vivid dramatization of daily life as pursued by the two representatives of the principal classes: Wayzaro Āsaggāsh and her tenant. This scene opens abruptly, without any formal introduction of the characters or their business to ease the transition to it. By plunging the reader into the middle of a dialogue between a feudal lady

and a peasant as though the audience were already familiar with the situation, the author creates a strong sense of continuity, a sense of direct thematic link between the preceding passage and this scene. It is as though he were telling the reader: " Ihave already briefed you (in the passage) about this life which you are now witnessing (in this scene)." This sense of familiarity is further reinforced by the attempt to render the scene as pure drama by reducing the narrator's mediacy to just three statements of stage-direction: "says Wayzaro Āsaggāsh to one of her tenants," "answers the tenant," "continues Wayzaro Āsaggāsh" (p.7). Apart from these identifications of the speakers, the narrator makes no other intrusions right upto the end of the scene, either to specify the setting or to give background information about the speakers. Such information is made implicit in the dialogue.

The scene ironically depicts one of the basic factors perpetuating the stagnation of life: the parasitic relationship between the feudal class and the peasantry. It exposes the exploitation and dehumanization of the peasantry through the way Āsaggāsh treats her tenant. It emerges from the dialogue that the peasant has come to Āsaggāsh's home to appeal to her to lend him some sorghum. But the year before, he has apparently refused to help her collect her harvest because he was then busy with his own work. When hardship drives him to seek her help now, she takes her revenge by humiliating him with her disparaging remarks. She begins her rebuke by a lecture on good conduct: "The first wisdom is to fear God. Then to respect your superiors __ the aristocrats, the landlords, those whom the benevolence of their Emperor and the charity of God have not deserted" (p.8). She reminds him that the scourge of God would visit those who do not use their authority sufficiently and those who do not obey their masters. Within a few moments of this occasion she quotes twenty one proverbs, not merely to illustrate her point but also to to ridicule him:

> You are too proud; that is why poverty has ravaged you ... but why not? "A cock stands on heaps

of dung and crows."

(p.8)

The past is over; what I want to tell you now is .. what was it! Yes, for everything, God .. I mean once it has happened, "weeping blood, biting stone" is useless .. "wilting like a merchant robbed of his money, like a wheat crop ravaged by pests" is not a proper conduct for a man .. this season is the time for you to correct mistakes, for realizing the superiority of " a bald lion to a monkey with mane" .. you who had swaggered came to me only because I have wealth .. "a [scrounging] student who sees a tazkār, a retailer who sees merchandise"

(pp.9-10)

He is so overwhelmed by her scornful remarks that in one of the two proverbs that he quotes, he implicitly likens himself to a dog: "A shaggy dog dies of hunger while people assume it is in good shape" (p.8). After humbling him in this way, she turns to the business of his visit. When he asks her to lend him fifteen qunnās (baskets made of grass) of sorghum, she says: "Good .. fifteen qunnās ... that means I will give you nine qunnās and you will return fifteen qunnās in December" (p.10). When he complains that she is charging him too much interest, she replies: "As you may see, I don't want any interest. You will return in kind out of the large amount you reap. Besides, the sorghum will be measured for you until it spills over the brim of the qunnā.'A leg-bone willingly swallowed is more delicious than a piece of brisket'"(p.11). Verbal irony is here used to amplify her hypocritic nature. This becomes even more apparent in the way she presents her second demand:

"Let it be so; what else could I do ... [says the peasnt]

"Yes, that is better .. this year is not last year; there is nothing you could do .. by the way, when I do you a favour, you, too, may have to do

the same .. it is the sign of [being] a Christian...

"No objection, if I can ...

"The big lesson, the sign of a Christian is to return favours with favours; well then, what about giving me a hand in mowing the grass adjoining your place ...as you may see, I haven't demanded interest .. I mean as a favour! so as not to feel too indebted ... when we help each other God will help us; it pleases Him when He looks at us from above ... besides, mowing that grass would be no problem to you, and I wouldn't forget your favour in the future .. as you know I am a kindly person ... but, as I pointed out to you a moment ago, your steps are too hasty; 'What is fastened while running would come unloose while running,' .. try to bridle your steps .. yes, holding your nose in the air is something you would come to in good time. Even I didn't reach this position at once and all by myself; it is because my great grand-parents left me land that can make me drink tajj, because they did not sell their land for drinks and pass away. Yes, 'one lives according to the means in his home and not according to his neighbours' .. well, after you mow the grass .. it would only be about eighty loads .. bring it and stack it up near my compound .. the distance might be long .. so I won't hurry you __ you can complete it in fifteen days or a month ..

"Well, Madam, I must be on my way before it gets too dark .. the sun is setting ...

"Yes, don't worry about the sorghum, it will be measured to the brim ...

(p.12)

By mixing the threat of divine wrath with derision and rebuke Āsaggāsh deflates the peasant's self-esteem and pressurizes him to serve her slavishly. She feels no qualms when she tries to justify her act in the name of God. She gives one the impression that it is sacrilegious for the peasant not to comply with her demands but Christian

compassion when she tramples on his pride and squeezes him dry.

As has been pointed out earlier, this scene serves to dramatize the master/slave relationship between the feudal class and the peasantry. Despite the dynamism of the mode of rendition, the scene depicts a static situation as in the opening passage. So, once the relationship between the principal classes of the society has been shown, the peasant never reappears in the rest of the story. The dialogue between the two, therefore, does not lead to an action vital to the development of the plot. There is also another class of dialogues which neither advance the action nor dwell on issues directly arising from the unfolding of the plot. The dialogues within this category are vehicular by function, i.e., they are used for the articulation of the values, norms, beliefs and ideas of the traditional society and occasionally of those who do not conform to these. It is in these vehicular dialogues that Teso (a spokesman of the establishment __ an interpreter of the Fetehā Nagast, figuratively speaking) and Waldu (a representative of the budding bourgeoisie) engage in intellectual discussions particularly with Ādafres (a representative of the change-oriented people) and occasionally with each other or other people. Teso and Waldu, like their religious counter-parts (Ābbā Āddisē and Ābbā Yohānnes) are background characters with peripheral roles in the plot. In the case of the first two in particular, once they facilitate the link between Ādafres and the characters in Ārmānyā, they have little impact on the subsequent course of events. Through their pronouncements in the vehicular dialogues, they present the ethical standards against which the conservatives measure the conduct of those who are Western-influenced and advocate change. Teso and Waldu expound their conservative views in the vehicular dialogues of chapters eleven and thirteen, twenty five and twenty six, thirty five and thirty seven, forty four and forty six, fifty and fifty one. (Note how these dialogues are carefully distributed so as to avoid the kind of monotony that prevails in the actionally uninterrupted sequence of vehicular dialogues in Ār'āyā.) Still, despite their thematic

significance and distributed location, the kind of reader who is after a straight-forward story can easily regard them as dry polemics because of their lack of a direct impact on the current fictional situation. As can be seen in the following examples, their subject matters are general although references to a minor incident are occasionally made to generate the discussion:

> Since his arrival in Dabra Sinā, Āto Ṭeso has been in the habit of relaxing on the verandah after dinner. It is during this time that he discusses various subjects with Ādafres, Siwanē [sic: Frēwwā], and others.
>
> "... I thought I understood what you told me about culture. But when I tried to explain it to Balāy today, I got confused. You told me that tradition, etiquette, and heritage are together called culture ...
>
> "Yes I have told you so," says Ṭeso to his daughter Frēwwā.
>
> "You have told me that there are good traditions and bad traditions: giving an eight-year old girl to a suitor, pressing hot metal to our body when we suffer from a headache or darting pain, ... [etc., etc.] ...
>
> "Are you repeating to me what I told you? Wouldn't it be better if we discussed what you haven't understood ...?
>
> "What I haven't understood is: which ones do we regard as good traditions, good etiquette, and good heritage ...?
>
> "There are many types among the traditions, etiquette, and heritage," begins Āto Ṭeso. "For instance, we have a long-established tradition of respecting other people's property. We don't want what belongs to others and we won't let others impinge on ours. We have the tradition of authority and supremacy which gives sanctity to this respect and protects our rights. What this means is that we have the tradition of respecting

authority and obeying our superiors. For instance, the unity of a family is maintained through the authority and supremacy of the father. If his authority is stripped away or if his supremacy is contested by another rival, it then means that the once-united family would disintegrate. Apart from this, the Church has the authority of religion; the State invests power and authority in its officials so as to ensure peaceful life.

(pp.72-73)

Āto Waldu, Ādafres, and Ṭeso have continued with their discussion after the meeting __

"The bee and the mosquito, both different insects, collect nectar from a flower. __ The bee makes honey with the nectar it gathers from the flower. Having satisfied its needs, it also benefits man.__ With the same nectar, the mosquito makes its poison.__ With this poison it then transmits malaria.__ Therefore, because one uses it for good and the other for evil, we cannot say that the nectar is undesireable ...

"In short, Āto Waldu is saying that civilization is dependent upon its recipient .." sums up Ādafres, thinking that he got a point on which to challenge Āto Ṭeso's view.__

"Nevertheless, nevertheless ...," continues Āto Ṭeso, "the manner in which civilization is assimilated in our country seems to me to be following mainly the way of the mosquitoes ... this won't do, really! all our attempts to get what we lack before we know what we already have is useless ... we must understand one another ... now, for example, let us see the results that Western civilization has produced since it came to our country ...

"Very good! very good! let us see ..." butts in Ādafres.__

"What kind of Western civilization has come to our country ...? I think we have to know first

what kind it is ..

"Good, what kind is it ...?" butts in Ādafres again.__

"The Western civilization that has come to our country is one which, whether directly or indirectly, enables one to acquire wealth ... because there is nowadays, in the government or private organizations, this thing called office work which improves one's living standard, one which gives exams to those ravaged by poverty and, when they pass, secures them the said positions of office work ... one which opens the doors leading to Western life-styles and a Western type of society ... one which makes people parrot mostly impractical academic education and shows them ways of life founded on fantasy .. though I don't know whether God is helping us here or not, one whose special base is in the towns __ one which has not penetrated into the countryside .. one which by merely being dubbed Western civilization has become likeable or fearsome ....

(pp.227-228)

As can be observed in the preceding passages, the dialogues are dominated by the views of the conservatives, particularly Teso's. Frēwwā and Ādafres make little contribution by forwarding counter-arguments of their own. When the discussion is between Waldu and Ādafres, the latter is nearly always on the defensive. The one time when the initiative is taken by him and his arguments prevail over Waldu's is when he produces his two-page long statistical data __ figures which further indicate the generalized nature of the subject matter of the vehicular dialogues. Teso and Waldu share similar views on most of the issues which they discuss with Ādafres. Apart from Teso and Waldu, other characters such as Balāy, Āsaggāsh, Ābbā Āddisē, and Gorfu are critical of Ādafres and what he advocates. He and Kebrat as well as Frēwwā are imbued with Western values and tend to defy the norms of the traditional society. Even then, their overall negative

depiction, particularly Ādafres', shows that the implied author is no less reserved in his attitude towards those radical elements in the society than he is towards the conservatives.

II

Ādafres makes his first appearance in a satirical scene. He is a strong advocate of the student movement. He also likes being crowded by people who admire his speeches. So he goes to the lawcourt (in Dabra Sinā) and begins talking to the litigants. For over a month he listens to the endless wrangles of each one . They, too, come to know that he is the nephew of the central judge and begin hanging around him to solicit favours. One day, he decides to offer them an ultimate solution to all the problems which bring them to the courts. So, he begins by explaining to them their "fundamental mistakes" and what they should do in the future to avoid them:

> ".. I understand all that you are saying.. but these problems cannot be solved by winning one lawsuit or two lawsuits. It is useless if you defeat your wife today or if she defeats you; others, too, would divorce like you and fill up the compound of the lawcourt.__ Therefore, we must examine an issue from its origin.__ First, as in the saying, water from the source, an issue from its origin __
>
> "It is: an issue from its origin, water from the best," they correct him __
>
> " .. Yes, as in that saying .. to begin with, let us ask ourselves some basic questions about the factors upsetting the foundations of the family: one ... why have prostitutes increased in the towns and the countryside ...?
>
> "Because they found an easy life!" says one litigant before Ādafres finishes his point __
>
> ... No! No! That is not the answer .. we will give the answer later __ how can their number be

reduced? second question ...

"By sending them back to where they came from .. by creating jobs," answers one litigant __

...Don't be in a hurry for the answer; I will give you the answer; don't be hasty __ why has the number of divorces among the older men and women increased? third question ...

"Because they couldn't get on well with each other!" slowly one litigant __

"Because the man's or the woman's lust has not cooled down," slowly another litigant __

"Because both the man and the woman want a younger person," slowly another litigant __

... What is the cause of young people's fear of marriage? fourth question ...

"Because he is a gutles youth of the Eighth Millennium," the other one __

... How could this be improved? fifth question ...

"By praying to the Only One ..

"By giving them religious education ..

"When the elderly set them good examples ..." replies each litigant to himself __

... Why have most people become graceless? sixth question ..

"Because their guardian angel deserted them ..!

"Because they are malicious and selfish .." mumble the litigants __

... And how could people know themselves and lead a better life? final question __

"What is he saying?" asks one litigant in a loud voice __

"Is he trying to say that there are people who don't know themselves?" continues another __

"By living according to his means," answers another one __

... Now, let us try to analyze them one by one .. to do this we will begin with lebbusa tel$\bar{a}$[3] ...

" Devil of the rubbish! What does he mean?" shouts one litigant in astonishment __

(pp.39-41)

- - -

"Listen, listen Ādafres __ May be you didn't see me, but I was listening to you ..

... Balāy! I didn't see you. You know, I was so absorbed in my speech that my eyes merely turned from person to person without clearly observing anything. __ Well, what do you think of the analysis of life I made for them? Don't you think I tackled the problem at its very root? It seems to me that most of them have followed me, telling by the way they look at me and in their immobility.__ But some of them, you know __ they don't at all listen to me. They are either deaf or they don't understand __ when I talk about farming they talk about Brutāwit [the girl saved from the dragon by St George] ...

"Well, you have been sweating your guts out for nothing.__ They have been looking at your mouth not because they were eager to hear what you would say. They were only waiting for you to finish your talk so that they could tell you their problems and ask you to intervene on their behalf. Let alone them, even I haven't understood most of what you have been saying ....

(pp.43-44)

In the above depiction, Ādafres' alienation is shown through the communication breakdown between him and the peasants. Although the issues he raises are varied, they have no direct bearing to the specific problems of the litigants. Nor is his analysis intelligible even to the twelfth-grade student Balāy. The "fundamental solution" he advocates is not as sensible as some of those suggested by the litigants. According to his theory of lebbusa telā, the root cause of most social problems is the disparity between one's image of an ideal partner and the real marriage partner. His solution for this is that one should first discover the qualities that one's ideal partner possesses and write these down. Then, when that person sees a girl who appeals to him and who has at least twenty per cent of those qualities, he should propose to her. When

they live together, her qualities will grow through time and correspond to those of his ideal partner. As for the girl's ideal partner, Ādafres assumes that it would somehow correspond to the real qualities of the man she marries. Ādafres does not explain either how his solution would remove existing marriage problems or how marriage problems become the "root" cause of other social problems. And when Balāy challenges his assumptions Ādafres either tries to evade the questions or becomes entangled in contradictions. Amazed by his friend's theory, when Kebrat asks him where he got "such warped interpretations of life " from, Ādafres says: "From the university, of course! Death and Life, Ignorance and Knowledge! __ what do you think I joined the university for? Don't think it was to parrot what was written .. it was to study the root causes of problems and find solutions.__ To dig out Truth from wherever she is" (p.56). Given this, the conclusion the reader would draw from the satirical portrayal is one which would confirm the validity of the criticism that Ṭeso and Waldu level against academic education and the student activists. Ādafres' theory of lebbusa ṭelā seems to serve as a metaphor for the reforms that the educated radicals advocate. As is demonstrated in his dealings with the peasants, Ādafres' "fundamental" solution for social problems is divorced from reality. By extension, his alienation seems to imply the alienation of the radicals. Thus, speaking of what people think of those like Ādafres, Waldu says:

> They say that although some teachers have been given the opportunity to serve for a long period of time, they have given you only academic education. As they have not given you the kind of education which can become your guide in life or create a new generation, you have become unreliable citizens. They say that the education you have received is incapable of making you differentiate the useful heritage of the past generation from the useless or to replace the worthless with a new and useful one.
>
> (p.231)

Ādafres is not shown discussing his theory of lebbusa telā with Teso and Waldu, for it is not given as a serious argument for the reader to ponder over. It is a fictional device for saitirizing impractical theories parroted by the educated younger generation. In his relationship with Siwanē and Romān, his theory is used against him to illustrate the contradiction between what he advocates and what he actually does. He tells Siwanē that many young men in the countryside are left without wives because the girls migrate to the towns where they contract venereal diseases and end up being sterile women. He says:

> Ethiopia's hope lies with the peasants ... It is from among the children of the peasants that we hope to get the future doctors and engineers ... Well ... if it is only the old and barren women who remain in the countryside, how do you think this hope of ours could be realized ..? No way! No way! A means must be found to make the young girls stay in their villages and those who have migrated return to where they came from.
>
> (pp.111-112)

But a few days later, he says to her, "Isn't it deplorable that such a girl like ... [Romān] is stuck in the countryside, infested with bed bugs, cockroaches, fleas, and lice?" (p.142) Again, when Romān herself tells him her plan to run away from home, he doesn't advise her not to break her engagement. Instead, he encourages her to go to Addis Ababa. He tells Siwanē the reason why there are "many divorces before marriage among the educated people is because they couldn't find a match for their lebbusa telā and ... because they forget to write down the distinguishing traits of their lebbusa telā" (p.107). But his own conduct belies his theory as when he monologizes: "Now, for example, if I were asked which one I would choose for a wife .. though I wouldn't marry ... really, whom would I choose ..? Romān is timid .. I like timid people.__ And music? I love music very much.__ Siwanē is a person of music. __ But then, Romān loves even my voice" (p.146). After he

begins his teaching in Dabra Sinā, when Ṣiwanē runs away to live with him, he bluntly tells her that he has no intention of marrying anyone. She pleads with him by declaring that it is only him that she loves more than anybody else and that she would die if she returns to the countryside and marries Gorfu. She challenges him to live upto his words by repeating to him his theory that marriage would fail if the actual partner does not match with the ideal, just as Gorfu cannot match with her ideal. Ādafres' only defence is that she needs to have a lot of education, "high school and university", to understand about the theory of lebbusa ṭelā. Waldu characterizes the educated younger generation as "hypocrites" who change like "chameleons". The description aptly fits Ādafres, for he has neither stable views nor moral integrity. After he makes Romān his mistress, when he sees her walking in the street with Ṣiwanē he becomes very furious. When Kebrat asks him what he is so mad about, he replies:

> "I don't want her to go out of the house .., especially to meet Ṣiwanē ...
>
> "May be you thought she might tell her about the relationship between the two of you ..?
>
> "Never! And who does she depend upon, after all ..? She won't do it ... besides, what is she to me ..? She .. is a housemaid ..! just a .. housemaid ...!
>
> "Wayzaro Ākalāt lives with you.__ On top of that there is Āṭṭāhu Warotā __ and thirdly __ Romān ...? What I am saying is, if Wardofā finds out that his daughter is living with you ...
>
> "Let him find out! I didn't force her to live me, did I ...?
>
> (p.323)

Among the characters in this novel, Ādafres is the only spokesman of the student activists. In his direct characterization, the narrator says of him:

> "There are times when he clashes with his audience

because of differences in opinion. When a debate starts about whether the student demonstrations are advantageous or disadvantageous, with his blood boiling and his countenance transforming, he argues that they are advantageous and necessary. Even then, his opponents, those who have felt that the recurrent student demonstrations are more harmful than good, are as many as the hairs on one's head.

(p.38)

Even Kebrat, who is strongly Western-influenced, opposes Ādafres' support for student strikes. Thus he says:

> Anything that exceeds the limit is bad __ they have been repeatedly told to continue with their studies __ through advice and criticism .. they refused __ their parents couldn't control them .. the police couldn't control them .. so, why do you blame the government?__ I didn't dislike the dispatch of the soldiers from Dabra Berhān.
>
> (p.293)

Teso and Waldu, too, are very critical of the student movement and those activists advocating sweeping changes:

> "I think that your situation is not that much worth worrying about.__ When those of you who have assimilated Western civilization are swallowed up by those who have not, then you would come back to your old selves.__ I think that even if there are some beliefs which you have acquired in school, you would abandon them when you start work and realize that they wouldn't benefit you ... even in our time, many of our friends spouted 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity'.__ Yet, we have heard them sing a different tune when they got wealth, rank, and status .. so, your situation does not seem to me very serious .. in fact, I

> think that it would be better if you freely express your views in your chants, writings, drawings, and harangues and get it over with there in your school compound ... [said Waldu]
>
> "But as you [Waldu] said earlier, the rage you [Ādafres and other students] feel in your school should not spill out on the excuse of giving warmth to ninety per cent of the Ethiopian people. When we ponder over it we would realize that they would be better off with their ignorance ... [said Teso]
>
> (pp.231-232)

Ādafres' death comes when the "rage" of the students spills out of their school compound. In the course of the demonstration, the students begin throwing stones at the security forces that have come to restore order. Ordinary pedestrians are struck and they, too, join in the stone throwing. Ādafres and Kebrat are struck while trying to stop the violence. When three shots are fired into the air, the students scatter. Kebrat is not seriously injured, but Ādafres dies a few hours later. Gorfu claims that Ādafres is struck by stones thrown by students, and, in the light of this, the student movement emerges as a destructive force.

Commenting on the death of Ādafres, Feqrē Tolosā says in his dissertation:

> Haddis Alemayehu kills Gudu Kassa without thinking about the negative implications of his death. Danachaw Worku makes an even greater mistake when he unjustly kills his protagonist with a stray stone thrown by striking students. If Adefres is in favour of student demonstrations as the author wants us to believe, doesn't he understand what this symbolises when he is killed by the same student demonstration? ... Even if it had pleased the author to kill Adefres, he could have done so by more convincing means. It would have been feasible ... if Gorfu had killed Adefres, or if Roman's father had [killed] him thinking that

his daughter had been led astray by him.
(pp.217-218)

A more or less similar view is expressed by Sāhla Sellāsē (in the article cited earlier in this chapter). He regards the death of Ādafres as "absurd" because "the provincial students are his own images, and he dies by their hands. It would have been more convincing and more meaningful if he died of the shot fired by his antagonist Gorfu." What both Feqrē and Sāhla Sellāsē fail to note is, firstly, the consistently negative attitude of the implied author towards Ādafres and his likes, and, secondly, the gain in ironic effect by making Ādafres die through the agency of the very student movement that he has been unequivocally supporting. Prior to this episode, the emphasis in the portrayal of Ādafres in his capacity as an exponent of the student movement has been on the negative traits that the implied author seems to attribute to the activists. Given this, the particular circumstance of Ādafres' death would give the implied author's criticism a sharper thrust and a logical conclusion. If Ādafres were to be killed by Gorfu (who, by the way, is not reported to have fired any shot), the perspective of the plot would suddenly shift to the love aspect of the story. This would eliminate the irony attending the nature of his present death and deny the criticism against the student activists a biting finale. The criticism, however, is implicit even in what Gorfu says at the time that Ādafres is struck and falls down: ".. Our ignorance is better, my lord, our ignorance .. so much for knowledge .. what knowledge? to hell with it! .. knowledge ...?" and again, "Death and Life .. Ignorance and Knowledge .. couldn't keep them apart .." (p.325). Ādafres used to claim that "Death and Life, Ignorance and Knowledge shouldn't be feared" (p.37). Since he frequently utters these phrases like interjections in his speeches, they become his identity tag. Gorfu, who has earlier expressed to Ādafres his contempt for modern or rather academic education and the Western-influenced urban people, now disparages the same education by repeating Ādafres' phrases. The point he seems

to be making is that such knowledge as Ādafres' wouldn't widen the gap between life and death, that it is the kind of knowledge no better than ignorance, that people with such knowledge can bring nothing constructive, only chaos and destruction. To Gorfu, one physical proof of this is that the stone-throwing students spared neither the peaceful pedestrians nor their vociferous supporter in their violence.

IV

One of the innovations in this portrayal is the way different items are juxtaposed to underline their common feature. In the following example, the speech of Ābbā Yohānnes and the content of Balāy's letter are interlaced with one another to accentuate their lack of substance and vitality. Under the shade of a big tree, people have gathered to hear what the priest has to tell them. The purpose of the speech he is reading is to encourage the people to contribute money for building an extension to the local school. Sitting near a little brook flowing from the base of the big tree, Frēwwā is silently reading the letter Balāy has written her in verse:

"If you are seen or if I see you,
You whom I am not ashamed of,
You whom angels are guarding
Inside their fence of swords,
You whom they are feeding
Milk from the sky,
You who have sprouted holy water
For the sprain caused by your love,
Come to me, my darling, so I may be cured..."

silently reads Frēwwā with no change in her expression.

"Unity is liberty, liberty is unity. Unity is a country, a country is unity. Unity is Government, Government is unity. Civilization is unity, unity is civilization. Life is unity, unity is life. Power is unity, unity is power. If a

country's mātab is broken, if a people's faith lapses, it means that the fall of both the country and the people would be disastrous ...

"So that I may get satiety without eating,
Just by looking at you
Come to me, my darling,
Let us see each other with our eyes.
You are the light inside my body
The outer part belongs to the sun
To whom I have long leased it.
Hurry up, let us build a cosy nook together,
After our work during the day,
Be my light during the night ...

Unity is liberty, liberty is unity.__ Otherwise, if you simply say liberty, liberty, it won't fill the mouth and give energy to the stomach __ it won't be colourful to the eyes and give pleasure to the body __ if it appears distant, deep, melodious, sweet to the ears, it won't fill our heart with pride and make us relax freely __ what hope, what guarantee could it have? No! Liberty is unity, personal, collective, like the sun, water, air __ one which does not discriminate between the rich and the poor, one which elevates the spirit __ one which gratifies, feeds day and night, night and day __ one which is limitless. Liberty is immortal, eternal; but it does not seek to delude man's happiness with 'I have a milch cow in the sky' ... So how is it possible? how can the earthly and the heavenly be united ...?

(pp.80-81)

Interlaced in this manner, the speech and the letter are presented in seven pages. Towards the end of the priest's speech, there is an interruption when the narrator reports the arrival of a merchant and his donkeys. When the merchant notices the gathering, he, too, interrupts his song until he walks some distance away from them. Then

comes the last part of the priest's speech:

> "So, how can this bestial nature of man be removed ...? By reminding people that unity is power! When each of us follow this path! in case! we encounter on the edge of this path unity carrying power ...," so saying, he finished his speech and taking a deep breath, when he was about to move towards his prayer staff, "Oh, my! I have forgotten the main thing .. therefore, you should all contribute as much as you can for this school which strengthens our unity and in which the children of Amharas, Gāllās, Ādāls, and Muslims will be educated ... what you have given on earth will await you in heaven .. I have here contributed three berr ..."
>
> (p.84)

After this speech, a second merchant comes by driving his donkeys and singing a love song like the first merchant's. The couplets sung by both merchants are repetitions of some of the couplets in the love letter that Frēwwā is reading. After the second merchant passes by, Tārmābar Mountain echoes back his song. Earlier the narrator has reported that the priest's speech was being echoed by the hills. The echo or repetition thus links the speech, the letter, and the songs, which are all cliché-ridden. The priest is so oblivious of the purpose of the gathering that it is only after he finishes his main discourse that he remembers he has gone off track. Even when he finally adresses himself to the main subject of the gathering, he couches his appeal for money in religious terms, as if the school were meant to be put to the service of the Church and as if the contributions were alms. In contrast to the rising pitch of the priest when he becomes more and more engrossed in his oration, there is no change in Frēwwā's composure. Just as the boredom of the audience can be inferred from the absence of any reference to their reaction, so, too, can Frēwwā's lack of interest be sensed in her blank expression as she half-heartedly reads Balāy's letter.

Like the priest, he, too, has failed to deliver his message intelligibly. All that he has done is borrow some hackneyed couplets from old folksongs and present them as expressions of his love. The shallowness of his love is hinted at not only by the repetitions and echoes, but also by the symbolism of what happens to the letter: "Frēwwā is playing by scooping water with the letter written to her .. after she scoops with it two to three times, the characters are blotted out .. when the paper begins to macerate in her fingers, she drops it into the water altogether. After one __ two __ three pulls, it darts down the brook" (p.85). Like the fading ink (in parallel with the echoes), Balāy's love, too, does not have a hold on Frēwwā. Her feeling remains as cold as the water of the brook.

In another context, juxtaposition is used to facilitate the evocation of symbolically contrasting effects as in the following example. But let us first consider the background situation. During one of his discussions with Ādafres, Ṭeso argues that feddasā (propaganda) benefits society when it is monopolized by the few ruling elites. In their hands it becomes "not only culture but also the law, not only a norm in social life but also a binding condition" (p.88). If it becomes available for every one to engage in, "it means that the rest of the society would be boiled by an unbridled rage of modernity. But because feddasā has been the privilege of those with wealth and high position, the long-established culture of the majority of the people is preserved" (p.87). As opposed to the Westernized youth advocating change, these are "wise" āf āddāshes because they know what they are doing and would be careful not to bring any harm with their feddasā.[4] Any interested sector of the society that may hence try to bring about change without due regard to these "norms" would be rejected by the people. "Without first knowing in depth the concrete conditions in the country, to be led by some hypothesis and demand that this and that be done, as if it would apply only in the office or the university, is not enough" (p.89). Change must be based on what is cherished in the existing culture. According to Ṭeso, while

a prime minister or a president is simply the head of the administration, the "Emperor is above such aids __ he is the reflection of what the people already have or of the basic and stable culture __ tradition, etiquette, heritage __ philosophy that every Ethiopian wants to have" (p.90). So, declares Ṭeso, anyone who tries "to mock at, ctiticize, or belittle" his Emperor would be his avowed enemy, too. In his view, the purpose of opening schools is to produce people who would perpetuate the glow of the Emperor, not snuff it out. It is after Ṭeso has conveyed these views that the focus turns to Ākalāt and Ādafres playing their musical instruments one after another:

> Inside the house, Wayzaro Ākalāt has begun plucking her baganā [harp] ... sounds which sometimes lament, sometimes moan, sometimes entreat are reverberating. Majestic, glorious, divine sounds are raining .. sounds which seem to tickle people to raise their heads in attention __ they seem to rekindle the heart and stir the dreams of fame and glory. Like distant, hushed, muffled sounds of a retinue, like the ululation and clamour of loyal, admiring subjects, like an army of bees surging after its queen .. hums .. hums .. Wayzaro Ākalāt's baganā .. as if it were narrating the struggle of man and his unreachable goals .. hums .. hums .. hums ... Wayzaro Ākalāt's baganā, like a heart bereft of hope, like a lover gripped by paroxysm, terminating with a long sigh,piercing like a thorn ...
>
> Āto Ṭeso stretches himself with exerted effort and enters the house.__ Soon, Ādafres goes in after him __ a little later __ a reverberation like the the chatter of children, like the squeals of kids, like the unmuffled noises of life __ begins flowing out of the house ... grating __ softening .. whining __ flashing __ fading out ... Ādafres' accordion.
>
> (p.91)

In the above description, there is a distinct contrast between the musical sounds from the baganā and the accordion. Ākalāt's music has a sombre tone and creates impressions of sobriety and harmony. Ādafres' music is lighter in tone and gives a sense of youthful vigour manifesting itself in a cheerful clamour bordering on chaos. The baganā symbolizes the old, the traditional, the Ethiopian. With it are associated the qualities that Teso cherishes: moderation and conformity, spiritual inspiration, and a reverence for royalty and glory. The army of bees buzzing around their queen seems to allude to the kind of relationship that Teso would like to see between the Etiopian people and their Emperor. The accordion symbolizes the young, the modern, the Western. Its cacophonous sounds create impressions of a rebellious force with an unbridled energy full of potentials for the bright and the destructive.

The struggle between the forces of the heavenly and the worldly to win Siwanē's heart and mind is also presented in a juxtaposed manner. Following the incident at the police station, Siwanē stays with her uncle in the hope of one day being reunited with Ādafres. But as the days pass, her hopes dim out and her frustration increases. To find solace, she frequently goes to church and talks to the devout. It is while she is in this condition that Ābbā Yohānnes and Waldu compete to win her over to the kind of life that each cherishes. The pronouncements of each side are organized into six patterned chapters. In chapters fifty nine, sixty, and sixty one, Ābbā Yohānnes' views are presented. In the next three chapters Waldu's views are presented. In chapter fifty nine, Ābbā Yohānnes argues in general terms about the wiles of a materialistic life and the unlikelihood of the rich inheriting the Kingdom of God. In chapter sixty, he adresses himself to Siwanē's specific situation and tells her: "You, my daughter, it seems to me that from the start, the Lord has chosen you to be His servant, to show through you His Kingdom.__ The trials you have undergone, your claiming to be what you are not just to defend the honour of the person you love, the martyrdom you have shown, all these reveal that you are carrying the Cross of the Lord" (p.313). So, says Ābbā Yohānnes, " ... you are not a person for worldly love,

for worldly marriage, for rearing children. If you are not this, how could it become an alien ornament to you to be chosen from among other women to become Krestos Samrā, St Walatta Pētros, St Emmumāz ...?" (pp.313-314) In chapter sixty one, he narrates to her an allegorical tale about a pious person whom the devil entices into the city of sin with promises of a prosperous life. In the next three chapters, Waldu counters the priest's arguments with his own corresponding arguments. In chapter sixty two, he makes a general reflection on the ups and downs in life and the frustrations of one's expectations. In chapter sixty three, he focuses on Siwanē's current situation and tries to persuade her to be reconciled with her mother. He argues that all the efforts of her mother, all the wealth she has accumulated are primarily for the comfort and prestige of her daughter. In the next chapter, he recounts to her a tale whose message is that wealth can buy honour and prestige and conceal the blemishes of the owner. Unlike the other chapters, these six chapters begin and/or end with a series of dots which are patterned to form a triangle.[5] Their function appears to be to indicate elipsis, to suggest that both Ābbā Yohānnes and Waldu have said a lot of other things over a long period of time. When the patterned dots are located after the text in a given chapter, they are followed by the phrase "wayem dagmo" (roughly "or"), and this is one clue that the dotted gap between the text and the phrase stands for omitted speech.

The struggle between the spiritual and the secular also reapears in the last chapter, during the funeral of Ādafres. This time Waldu's place is taken up by gorfu, who tries to win her by rambling about his sympathy for Ādafres, his own promotion to the rank of second corporal for killing bandits, her mother's health, and her own beauty. He seems to repel her with his insensitive and ironic speech, for she suddenly moves away from the crowd of mourners and heads towards St Mary's Church. Gorfu follows her, with Ābba Yohānnes trailing behind him muttering: "Have you seen this wonder ..? this wonder __ it is astonishing; she shot out like a bullet __ it seems to me that you were trying to console her __ but

what is that to her? She is right __ let the mortals bury their dead __ just the fulfillment of the Lord's will, eh? Who could take what He has reserved for Himself? He chose her to be His servant __ created her for Himself __ May God grant us long life to witness the ceremony of her conversion to a nun ..!" (p.329) As Siwanē walks faster to the church, Gorfu tries to catch up with her. But Ābbā Yohānnes' pursuit irritates him and he slows down, eventually returning to the mourners. Ābbā Yohānnes quickens his steps, mumbling about her becoming a nun, but the story ends without any definite indication that his wish is fulfilled.

While most of the events in this story occur outside Ārmānyā, the most vivid descriptions of setting are reserved for the scenes in this hamlet. The reader has little idea of the appearance of the houses of the characters living in Dabra Sinā. But, in contrast, a whole chapter is devoted to a detailed description of Āsaggāsh's residence. This description comes after the reader has already been acquianted with the lady and the main members of her family in the first four chapters. The narrator begins by indicating the status of the lady ("daughter of a nobleman"), then the location of her residence ("a little lower on the hill where the church of Doqāqit Mikā'ēl was built"), and moves closer to the large compound. He specifies the types of wood which make up the fence, the height of the fence, and the number of houses inside the compound. Then he moves to the largest house ("bēta negus"), specifies the size of the bedroom and living room ("elfeñ") and the smaller rooms built around it, and gives details of the type of timber used for building the walls and the roof. After this, he indicates the doors leading from the elfeñ to the adjacent rooms, and the items found in the elfeñ: the lady's leather-strapped bed, her late husband's weapons hanging on the wall, the corner where her favourite ram and goat are tied , the hearth, the row of madabs, the corner where young calves are tethered. Then he turns to the adgacent rooms and describes the objects found in them: her gear for making cotton yarn, the clay pots used for storing hot pepper and butter as well as those used for brewing tallā, the decorated

āgalgels and masobs, and her late husband's farm implements. With the description of the bēta negus thus completed, he turns to the next large house ("saqalā"), which serves as a kitchen, a store, and a stable. As in the first case, the raw materials used for building the walls and the roof are described in detail. Following this, he describes the function of the smaller houses, the type of bed used by the herdsmen, the kind of animals kept in these houses, and the features of the smallest house that Ṣiwanē favours. Then he turns to the granaries and enumerates the types of grain stored in them and those that are stored in the pits dug outside the compound. In this way, the narrator presents the description by moving in definite patterns: from a wider area to a smaller one, from a long distance to close range (from Ārmānyā to the hills, then to the fence, then to the largest house, then to the smallest house), from the structure of the building to the objects in the rooms. The description is given in one solid block, in isolation from any activity of the occupants, and consequently arrests the forward movement of the story.

Although it is not as detailed and as orderly as it is in this novel, there is an extensive description of the protagonist's rural house in Ār'āyā, too. The purpose of the description there is to demonstrate through Ār'aya's modern tastes what others should emulate. In Ādafres, the description reinforces the image of traditionalism by painting a domestic life that is free of any external cultural influences. The description deliberately isolates the setting from the characters' current activities so as to accentuate the dormancy of life. Despite the proximity of Ārmānyā to towns such as Dabra Sinā, it is not by accident that every raw material used for building Āsaggāsh's houses and every object of utility found in them (except her husband's gun) happens to be traditional and locally made. Nor are the details about the structure of the bēta negus and the saqalā necessitated by the exigencies of plot. It is rather to lay bare the domestic aspects of the kind of heritage which conservatives such as Ṭeso would like to perpetuate in the name of cultural independence and national identity. When answering his daughter's question as to

what is regarded as good heritage, he says: "... different items for the harness of a mule, different farm implements, different musical instruments __ the flute, the embiltā, the krār, the baganā; different building styles __ bēta negus, saqalā ..." (pp.74-75). Most of these items appear in the story: the flute is played by Wardofā, the krār by Siwanē, the baganā by Ākalāt; the farm implements are among the objects enumerated in the description of her houses, and the styles of the buildings follow the bēta negus and saqalā modes.

Whereas the description of Āsaggāsh's residence is given in a solid block, that of the evening scenes in the first and second chapters is interspersed in the dialogues. This description, in contrast to the monotonous one discussed earlier, makes one feel briefly the bustlings of life before it is dampened again by the prevalent torpor. The distribution of the details facilitates the evocation of a sense of the passage of time and the changing moods of the characters in the scene.

Following the dialogue between Āsaggāsh and her tenant (who twice repeats that he must leave before it gets too dark), the focus shifts to the scene in which Gorfu tries to cajole Romān into calling Siwanē for him. At the beginning of the description, the sudden awakening of the hamlet from its day-time slumber is dramatized by the use of sound imagery and the movement of animals as the sun sets:

> As it is the time when the cattle return from grazing, cows and oxen on one side, sheep and goats on one side, draught animals on a different side are marching up the hill towards their home. The chirring of grasshoppers, the buzzing of flies, the humming of bees are echoing across the hills. The cocks are crowing off and on. The cows low and the calves moo and frolic. That village which has stayed quiet in the day momentarily glows with life, only to be muffled and enveloped by the slowly advancing darkness.
>
> (pp.12-13)

Following the above description, the narrator presents the dialogue between Gorfu and Romān and a commentary on the young man's physical appearance and the purpose of his visit. The chapter closes with Romān going to the house to call Ṣiwanē for him. The scene of the second chapter opens with a brief and contrasting description in which the emphasis is put on the changing patterns of light and the growing silence. Accordingly, the hills become dimmer and dimmer. The clouds hasten to make way for the black sky. The moon comes out looking like a small flame. The sun disappears painting the horizon with blueish, golden, and yellowish shafts of light. Silence gradually descends upon the village. Says the narrator, the cows become quiet when they rejoin their calves. The goats and sheep become quiet when they are tethered in the warm corners. The bees become quiet when they settle down in their hives. The cattle have been given their night food. In every household, the hearth has begun to glow. The farmers have begun eating their dinner. Except for the rumination of the animals, the chirring of the grasshoppers, and the croaking of frogs, not much sound is heard.

With the setting thus made conducive for the evocation of the atmosphere of romance, the dialogue between Gorfu and Ṣiwanē begins. He is standing on the outer side of the fence and she is on the inner side. After a few exchanges, the dialogue is interrupted by another piece of description. The farmes and the herdsmen are now preparing to go to bed. As usual, Wardofā has begun playing his flute before retiring to bed. A whistling wind blows off and on. The tips of the trees are swaying to and fro. The distant clouds are chasing each other, occasionally eclipsing parts of the moon and casting sudden shadows across the village. After these details comes another slice of dialogue. Ṣiwanē is anxious to put Gorfu at ease, though, unknown to her, he is struggling with himself about how to express his love for her. The description, too, begins to shift its emphasis from conveying the progress of the evening to evoking the changing moods of Gorfu. In this context, Wardofā's flute begins to play a more prominent role. The brancehs and leaves stop rustling and "raise their heads to the warm sky as if

attentively listening to Wardofā's flute" (p.18). A mixture of a warm and cold breeze "lightly caresses" the eyes and cheeks. Silence has reigned over the surrounding area and the tranquil life "flows through the funnel of a flute" (p.19). In the next bit of dialogue Ṣiwanē inadvertently offends Gorfu with her remark about his disguising himself as an Ādāl man while hunting for some booty. So, to make him relax, she asks him to show her how to fire the gun he is carrying with him. She knows that the subject of guns and physical prowess would raise his spirit. While Gorfu demonstrates to her how to fire the gun, the tune of the flute, too, changes to a war chant: "... it crackles .. touching the root of adolescence, audacity, boldness __ stroking the guts of strength, of life ... by surging ... leaping ... pushing ... pouring out" along with the voices escorting it (pp.20-21). After some more conversation, Gorfu fires the gun to prove that the bullets he is carrying are genuine. Ṣiwanē stares in the direction where the bullet disappears, her mind momentarily absorbed in thought. Gorfu silently looks at her, himself lost in a romantic reverie. Wardofā's flute pipes on, whistling, "panting __ going far __ dipping __ falling __ rising __ softening ... like a whisper, a cosy chat .. getting close and distant at the same time, like an ideal, like the depth of love" (p.22). In this way, the flute becomes animated and dramatizes the feelings of the characters.

In the above description, sound imagery is created by the use of onomatopoeia: "sirsirtā" for the chirring of grasshoppers, "zezetā" for the buzzing of flies, "emmemtā" for the humming of bees, "qurqurtā" for the croaking of frogs, "shakkem __ shakkem" for the sound of rumination, and the verb form of "kukuluu" for the crowing of cocks and "embwāā" for the lowing of cows.

On some occasions, visual imagery is evoked by the repetition of a letter or rather a sound in a word. It is in this manner that the series of waves are described when Ādafres picks up pebbles and meditatively throws them one by one into the pond: "__ a drop, a small circle __ telleq [big] circle __ tellelleq circle __ tellellelleq circle __ tellellellelleq circle __ tellellellellelleq circles are

created by it as it disappears" (p.146). There is only one syllable __ "lle" __ in the basic form of the Amharic word "telleq". But to create the image of the momentarilly increasing size and number of waves, the narrator repeats the word five times while correspondingly multiplying the number of the particular syllable. Thus there are two "lle"s in the second citation of the word, three in the third citation, four in the fourth, and so on until the waves become indistinct and disappear after the fifth one. The waves symbolically signify the illusory nature of Ādafres' lebbusa ṭelā, which like them is intangible.

V

The description of the physical features of the characters is generally given in solid blocks, as part of the direct characterization by the narrator. Three distinct features are focused on in such a commentary in relation to Gorfu and Ādafres: physique, clothing, and manners. Gorfu is short and slim, with a wide forehead, dark-brown complexion, and knitted brows. When he visits Āsaggāsh's place, for instance, he carries his rifle, wears Ādāl sandals, and a set of traditional garments. When he walks his steps are firm, relaxed, and confident. From the way he brushes his big teeth with a piece of twig and shoots out the spittle, "one can guage the extent of his pride" (p.14). The narrator characterizes him as a suspicious country lad, untainted by inferiority complex and unflinching in his resolve to achieve what he aims at.

Ādafres is fair looking, tall and slim. Otherwise, in manners and disposition, he is Gorfu's opposite. He is marked by inconstancy not only in his views and moral principles but also in his dressing-style and even gait, as though he were undergoing the kind of identity crisis that Teso and Waldu attribute to the Western-influenced youth. He is freakish in his hair-style: "When he feels like it he wears it short or grows it into a gofarē or has it completely shaved off and comes wearing a cap" (p.37). His dressing-style is freakish: "Sometimes he wears a shirt and a pair of shorts; sometimes a jacket, a T-shirt and

trousers; sometimes a woollen coat and khaki trousers. At times, when he appears in his best, he wears a woollen suit with the coat in a style that doesn't match the trousers" (p.37). His gait is also freakish: "Sometimes he walks with his head bobbing up and down, or he moves in a jog trot, or scurries without any need for haste" (p.37).

The description of Ṣiwanē and Frēwwā is not as detailed and as concrete as that of Gorfu and Ādafres. The narrator does not comment about Ṣiwanē's physical features as much as what is given in Gorfu's romantic reverie:

> ... How beautiful she has become! Look at the radiance of her face __ those eyes which twinkle like the stars, which draw one to them like water in a deep well, eyes in which one can see the glow of her soul ...
>
> ... such teeth .. such a head, how it sits on her well-shaped shoulders ... and she sways it, too, __ like the head of a flower __ one which sprays its fragrance at every angle __ one which breathes perfume.
>
> (p.22)

The above description is appropriate for the mood in which Gorfu is found, but it doesn't enable the reader to perceive clearly the beauty that Gorfu is here admiring. Frēwwā, too, is described in a general manner. Apart from the fact that she is slender, the other details dwell on her manners. Like Ādafres, she, too, is put in sharp contrast with her rural counterpart, Ṣiwanē.

The narrator characterizes Ṣiwanē as one who has not been pampered in her upbringing and who cherishes a simple way of life. Commenting on Frēwwā's upbringing, however, he says: "It is obvious that [Ṭeso] is over-indulgent in the care and attention he gives his daughter Frēwwā" (p.34). Ṣiwanē's "words, thoughts, actions come forth with ease. She has a lively soul, a youthful, gently ringing voice, and a sober, unfluctuating character" (p.26). Frēwwā, on the other hand, is a thrill-seeking, restless girl:

> She fidgets in her seat, moves her small shoulders up and down like a piston, laughs provocatively, enjoys confusing people by staring at them with cold but caressing, sometimes half-closed, sometimes wide-open eyes. The ever-present teardrop in her right eye is taken by some people as a sign of effervescence.
>
> (p.35)

Siwanē's eyes glow "not with the fire of lubricity, but with divine love" (p.26). Her glances are not the type that deliberately try "to make people bite their lips" or "dash for help" or "tremble" with lustful excitement. Frēwwā is a girl that Western music "tickles", that the Amharic love-song "I won't ever hate you" throws into laughter, whereas the song "echek-echek" draws a yawn from, a girl who, "as light attracts the moth, has the skill to draw to herself every young man she encounters" (p.35). That seems to be why she lets herself be courted by both Kebrat and Balāy simultaneously. Unlike Siwanē, she tends to be insensitive to the feelings of others, as when she threatens to call the police and drives away the many litigants who bring her all sorts of presents and try to get her help. Siwanē does not like to present as her own the ideas she gets from books or people she talks to. Frēwwā, on the other hand, is pretentious, as when she echoes her father's views and defends the superstitious beliefs of Balāy's mother. But, ironically enough, she does not seem to realize that the old lady wants her to be her daughter-in-law and inherit the trinket she worships. The idealized characterization of Siwanē reinforces her symbolic representation of Ethiopia. Her name evokes an association with the ark of St Mary of Zion, which was supposed to have been brought over to Axum — an association which underlines the element of religion and traditionalism. Her relationship with Ādafres can be interpreted as one in which her desire for change and modernization fails to materialize.

Thomas Kane asserts that "stream of consciousness makes its appearance in Ādafres" (p.20). But he does not specify

his criteria for stream of consciousness or provide any textual evidence. In Story and Discourse, Chatman offers a workable definition of stream of consciousness by differentiating it from interior monologue. He uses "conceptual interior monologue" for labelling "the record of actual words passing through a character's mind," and "perceptual interior monologue" for the communication "by conventional verbal transformation, that of the character's unarticulated sense impressions (without the narrator's internal analysis)" (p.188). He takes stream of consciousness to mean: "... the random ordering of thoughts and impressions. This is appropriate to the implications of 'stream'. The mind is engaged in that ordinary flow of associations, at the opposite pole from 'thinking to some purpose'" (p.188). But there are also some features shared by both interior monologue and stream of consciousness: the use of present tense verbs and first person pronoun reference by the thinking character; the deletion of quotation marks and the "prohibition of express statements by a narrator that the character is in fact thinking or perceiving" (p.185).

If we apply Chatman's criteria to the passages in which the characters' consciousnes is reported, we will find that the thoughts and impressions are neither non-plot centered nor flow on the basis of free association. The content of Romān's reverie, for instance, is logically ordered. Sparked off by Ādafres' advice that she should run away to Addis Ababa, it begins with her would-be husband's search for her there, moves to their reconciliation through mediators, then to the processes of the marriage ceremony, and finally to the anticipation of the pain that awaits her on her first night with the bridegroom. The narrator explicitly identifies her preoccupation when he says, "seeing that Romān is absorbed in thought" (p.125). Part of the thought is given within quotation marks, as in the dialogues.

Ādafres' thought prior to the incident near the pond is presented within quotation marks although the narrator does not say that he is thinking. Still, the flow of thought is plot-pragmatic. Apart from reinforcing Ādafres' characterization by exposing his inability to implement what he preaches about lebbusa ṭelā, it prepares the reader

for Ādafres' rejection of Siwanē's plea to live with him. In the second instance, the narrator explicitly indicates that Ādafres is engaged in thought. This flow of thought serves two purposes. His fear of being infected by drinking the water from the pond shows cultural differences between the urban and rural people. His desire to approach the girl fetching water from the pond and his hesitation to do so not only reinforces the contrast between him and the bold Gorfu who abducts Siwanē, but also shows the impact of the beating he has received earlier because of Romān. Ādfres tries to make up for his lack of boldness by indulging in excessive rationalization.

What Gorfu thinks in Robi, too, is plot-centered. Both instances of thinking (pp.238-239, 240) are given within quotation marks and overtly identified by the narrator's comment. Here is what goes on in his mind after he proposes to Siwanē. (The two are walking together in the outskirts of the semi-desert town. A little further away from them, Ādāl girls are bathing in a stream.)

> ".. Ādāls are always Ādāls; all this dipping into the water, only to daub themselves with their butter again.__ And they don't scrub their body __ but why bother themselves .. true, their smell won't change ... and that hair of theirs! Let alone water, even a bullet wouldn't penetrate it .. and they don't take off their cowries.__ Perhaps they are still wearing their daggers, too ..and the quantity of their jingling ornaments .. damn! .. I shall come here and do drill for some three months .. soldiering, too, is a livelihood; half-corporal, full-corporal .. I could get a promotion, too, .. the heat of today's sun penetrates into the head ... how the sand burns.__ What looks like a black rock over there might be an Ādāl girl sleeping naked .," quite unusually, frustration is rocking Gorfu.
>
> (pp.238-239)

Unlike the presentation of consciousness in previous novels, there is some degree of random ordering in the

above quotation. It depicts how agitated Gorfu becomes when Siwanē turns down his marriage proposal. The flow of thought is "purposive" in another sense, too. It conveys to the reader Gorfu's plan to join the army. It also authenticates the narrator's remark that Gorfu is a man of firm determination. He aims to get promotion in the army and that is what he achieves near the end of the story. The subsequent flow of thought shows his jealousy of Ādafres as well as his plan to abduct Siwanē.

What we, therefore, find in Ādafres is not stream of consciousness but the controled flow of plot-centered thoughts and impressions. It is in his English novel, The Thirteenth Sun (London, 1973), that Dāññāchaw applies the technique of the stream of consciousness.

Notes and References

1. "The Novels of Daniachew Worku", The Ethiopian Herald, 27 October 1974.

2. For details of the commemorations on each day of the whole year, see the translation of the Ethiopic Synaxarium by E. A. Wallis Budge, The Book of the Saints of the Ethiopian Church (Hiddesheim, 1976).

3. This is one of the new coinages by Dāññāchaw and it roughly means what one conceives as an ideal; for instance, one's mental image of an ideal wife, an ideal husband, an ideal hero, an ideal leader, etc. Ādafres here uses it within the context of an ideal marriage partner.

4. Molvaer's misinterpretation of "feddasā" leads him to draw a conclusion which conflicts with the spirit of the chapter: "afaddaš ... is a person who talks about reforms, but it is clear from the context [he] does nothing to bring them about; feddāsa, i.e., af eddāsa, is, then 'talk of reforms' but does no real work of reform. The

chapter is intentionally obscure, but it transpires that it is directed mainly at the government and national leaders. They have formed a closed circle and are only concerned to preserve their self-interest" (pp.178-179). However, when Ṭeso talks about feddasā he is neither criticizing the ruling elites for failing to make reforms nor using this term in the narrow sense of "talk of reforms". In the context in which he is using it, the term means "propoganda", as Ādafres himself uses it interchangeably in the same chapter. Ṭeso says that there are many kinds of āf āddāshes or propagandists: there is "an āf āddāsh of patriotism, of love of money, of society, of civilization, of ancient heritage, of education __ there might even be an āf āddāsh of ignorance" (like him!) (pp.86-87). According to Dastā Takla Wald, āf āddāsh means "informer, meddler, or gossip". But this version does not exactly fit the context in which Ṭeso uses the term.

5. Molvaer thinks that the patterned dots create the sign of the cross, but he does not explain in what way this is so, (pp.237-238).

Chapter Nine

KA-ĀDMĀS BĀSHĀGGAR

I

This popular novel by Ba'ālu Girmā seems to have been partly based on the author's own experience.[1] From the interview that Ba'ālu gave to the Amharic weekly[2] one can infer some parallels between his own history and the protagonist's. According to the interview, Ba'ālu studied at General Wingate Secondary School and the University College of Addis Ababa, and later went to America, where he got an M.A. Degree in Journalism and Political Science. On his return he rejoined the then Ministry of Information, where he held a senior post until his recent banning. While still a student, Ba'ālu developed an interest in literature and had an ambition to write fiction. The protagonist of this novel, Ābarrā, too, attends General Wingate school and the University College before going to America, where he gets an M.A. Degree in Political Science. One of the places where he works after his return from America is the Ministry of Information. Like the author, he has an artistic inclination. Furthemore, both appear to be critical of the bureaucracy. Explaining how he came to write his first novel, Ba'ālu said in the interview:

> At one time, I used my authority and published something on the Church in Manan magazine. As it was found to be contrary to the existing policy, I was debarred from my work for six months. A hundred berr was deducted from my salary every month, but I went to my office regularly and signed the register of attendance. As I didn't have any other work, I became frustrated. It had been my ambition to write fiction and so I sat down and started writing.

At the time of the interview, Ba'ālu was the Permanent

Secretary of the same ministry. In his assessment of his first novel, one can detect a tendency to see it in a new ideological light. For instance, commenting on the idea-content of the novel, he said that the work shows the difficulties of the younger generation in realizing and pursuing their true calling or genius "because of the nature of the system of rule." The portrayal, according to him, showed how the system "stifled" the genius of young people. "Its beginning with silence and ending in a prison reflect the life in which young people were found at the time and the worthlessness of the social system." Nevertheless, he also correctly characterized the work as "idealistic". Contrary to Ba'ālu's claim, the portrayal bears little evidence which can show one that "the nature of the system of rule" is responsible for the protaganist's difficulties in realizing his artistic aspirations. Politics is a secondary matter in Ābarrā's life in particular and in the lives of the other characters in general.

The novel is eesentially about Ābarrā's struggle to become a full-fledged artist. While the central conflict is within the protagonist himself, its resolution comes through externally motivated changes in his situation. We first encounter Ābarrā while he is quietly pacing up and down in his living room, waiting for the hot water to fill up the bathtub. As Ābarrā's attention shifts from himself to the noise outside and then back to himself , the reader is afforded a glimpse into his character and the issue that is denying him peace of mind. The details unfold through associations. As Ābarrā proudly stares at the golden window curtains and the florid sofa set with the matching carpet, his eyes come to rest on the colourful painting on the wall. The narrator reports that Ābarrā looked through the painting at himself, "at the life that he wasted __ the past life which he felt he might not get again in the future" (p.8). Looking at the painting leads him to inquire in his monologue whether it was society or his education, or his own self that is responsible for his degeneration. "The aim of education is to enable each person to know himself, to realize his natural talent. But who am I?" asks Ābarrā. Earlier, the narrator has characterized Ābarrā by saying:

"Since Ābarrā's mind galloped from one thought to another, he was incapable of taking up one matter and pursuing it to its final conclusion. That was why he had buried in himself his aspiration to be a poet or an artist. But his soul had been craving to express itself in some way" (p.6). The painting now evokes this conflict within Ābarrā. His reaction shows that he is still undecided as to whether to satisfy the urges of his soul by turning whole-heartedly to the pursuit of his artistic interest or to ignore this urge and lead "the ordinary" life that his relatives and colleagues cherish.

The conflict is sustained by the nature of his personality and the pressures of opposing external forces. That Ābarrā has strong artistic inclinations has already been indicated in his attitude to the painting. This indication is further reinforced by his reaction to the beauty of the moon, the reminiscence of his childish attempt to draw his old teacher, and his drawings of life in the office. But Ābarrā also lacks single-mindedness. He is too restless even to stay at one job or in one house for a long period. He has already changed his job four times and his house nine times in just five years. His friend sees this restlessness as an outward manifestation of his attempt to escape from his inner urge. Ābarrā does not deny this. But, rather than decide on his goal in life and make the necessary preparations for its fulfillment, he leads a day-to-day life. His motto is: "What is valuable is the time in one's hand ... tomorrow is tomorrow ... and the bridge between the two is unreliable" (p.38). So, he would neither make plans for the future nor save money. He prefers to use his earnings for furnishing his home with quality goods, buying himself fashionable garments and enjoying high life, with its music, dance, drinks, and sex. It is this side of his life that is depicted in the flashback to his past relationship with Susan Ross. As his gaze turns from the painting to the large radiogram, his mind switches to the time he courted Susan Ross and how she made him buy it. On the night he first brings her to his home, she refuses to have sex with him unless there is music in the room. The next day he buys an expensive radiogram on credit. But the

lady returns to her country not much later. Hence, although the urge of his soul to express itself artistically is strong enough to deny him peace of mind, he lacks the self-control to give it the necessary attention and sacrifice to satisfy it. Apart from the perseverance needed to develop his creative genius, there is also the problem of earning a living. Ābarrā cannot concentrate on both his job and his calling simultaneously. He also feels that his society is not the type in which a beginner like him can earn sufficient income to enable him to lead a comfortable life. Unable to make up his mind one way or the other, he thus continues to vacillate.

The pressures which sustain his internal conflict come from two people in particular: on the one side is his elder brother, Āto Ābāta, and on the other side his most intimate and old-time friend, Hāyla Māryām. These two rivals struggle with one another to draw Ābarrā to the values and life-styles that each cherishes.

Ābāta is uneducated and a traditionalist. Like his mother, he is excessively proud of his feudal background and always boasts of the prestige the family enjoyed before the death of their father. He craves to have a child so that the line and memory of his feudal father would be perpetuated. But, in spite of his remarrying several times, he has not been blessed with a child. As old age begins to weigh on him, desperation drives him to bank on Ābarrā for the perpetuation of the family line. He urges his younger brother to stick to one job, improve his rank, build a house of his own, marry a girl from a well-to-do family, and beget children. To this end, he enlists the help of Ābarrā's boss, the Minister who obligingly gives Ābarrā a salary increment and urges him to settle down. There are also other people who reinforce Ābāta's pressure on Ābarrā. Their mother Wayzaro Bāfanā constantly nags her younger son not to deny her the joys of being a grandmother. His sister-in-law Elfenash, whom Ābarrā is very much fond of, appeals to him to end her torment by marrying and having children. She tells him that she couldn't stand any longer his mother's insinuations that she is responsible for Ābāta's being without a child. Ābāta has a very strong will-power and leaves

no stone unturned to achieve his aim. He thinks that Hāyla Māryām is the major obstacle that prevents him from making Ābarrā fulfill his wishes. So, in addition to urging Ābarrā to break his relationship with his friend, he also asks Hāyla Māryām to persuade Ābarrā to stick to one job, improve his status, and become a family man. But Hāyla Māryām refuses to oblige him, for such advice would be contrary to his own interest and philosophy.

Hāyla Māryām and Ābarrā studied together both locally and abroad. They share similar views in respect to the mission of people with special talents. Unlike Ābarrā, Hāyla Māryām grew up in poverty. But now he wants nothing more than a lone and simple way of life, as he thinks that marriage could be a hinderance to the pursuit of his true calling. Material comfort and prestige are secondary matters in relation to what he regards as "answering the call of life". Those who are aware of their genius, of their true calling, and commit their energies to its realization are considered by him as worthy members of the society, for they do not just take but also give in return. He tells Ābarrā: "The cause of my life is literature, yours is painting. You know it, I know it. Those who know the call of their life and express their soul through their talents are gods, not burdens, not parasites, but gods" (p. 33). He knows that, unlike him, Ābarrā does not have the fortitude to engage in both his work in the office and his painting practice at the same time, with one mind. So he presses him to leave his job and devote himself to his calling. He promises to share with him his monthly income and reminds him that he has to sacrifice some of the comfort he is used to so as to become his true self. He thinks that if Ābarrā quits his job, he would have no choice but to commit himself to the realization of the artistic genius "craving to come out into the light." Such a commitment would be a source of encouragement to him: "Don't worry about me; I can work and write at the same time. A little sleep would be enough for me. But to be an artist you need your whole time. This you must do both for your own sake and for mine. Your resolution can become my strength" (p.48).

The struggle within Ābarrā thus finds an external manifestation through the opposition of interests between Ābāta and Hāyla Māryām. The impact of their pressure is apparent in what Ābarrā says to Hāyla Māryām: "Suddenly every thing is becoming confusing. During the last three days, I haven't had a jot of sleep. You, my sister-in-law, and my brother are going to drive me crazy" (p.82). To this, Hāyla Māryām replies: "I don't understand what is so confusing .... The choice is clear: to hold onto your salary, get married, and rear children, or to realize your talent and become a creator?" (pp.82-83). The complication of the plot comes when Ābarrā takes steps in both directions. He decides to follow Hāylā Māryām's advice and quit his job. He plans to do this two months later, by which time he expects to finish repaying the debt he incurred to buy his car. On the other hand, after barely three weeks of acquiantance , he readily agrees to marry Lulit. It is this marriage that shifts the spotlight from the conflict within Ābarrā to the conflict among the people around him.

Lulit is a vindictive girl as far as her attitude towards men goes. Early in her adolescence she is raped by a stranger. After taking bribe and reconciling with the rapist, her step-father marries her to someone. Her husband flogs her mercilessly and sends her packing home when he discovers that she is not a virgin. With the help of some people she comes to Addis Ababa and joins a boarding school. As she matures she develops a negative attitude towards men. She determines to use her beauty to attract them and when they fall in love with her she makes them worship her like a goddess, without yet reciprocating their love. Wounding their pride becomes a way of avenging her past misfortunes. One such worshipper is Gadlu, whose servility flatters her ego and whose money satisfies her fancy. But she becomes bored with him when he sticks to her for too long. Still, each time some other young man tries to woo her affection, Gadlu finds out about it and drives him away from her in some devious way. Gadlu is married to a wealthy old woman whose money he is secretly squandering on Lulit. Although he cannot marry Lulit, he is determined that no one else will have her. Desperate to escape from his hold,

therefore, she swallows her pride and proposes to Ābarrā. As she takes him to be a more agreeable alternative, she readily supports his plan to leave his job and become a full-fledged artist. Ābarrā feels that if he marries her, he would not only avoid becoming a financial burden to his friend, but also fulfill the wishes of his mother, his brother, and his sister-in-law. Gadlu, who is called "Machiavelli" by some of his former friends, strives to break their relationship by spreading slander against Lulit. Ābāta hears that Lulit is a hardened whore and so initially opposes the marriage, but eventually agrees to it when he realizes that Ābarrā will not give up the idea. The gossip-monger, Tasammā, tells Ābarrā's colleagues that Lulit is a thief and a sex-maniac who has turned to prostitution because she never gets sexual satisfaction. On the day he submits his resignation letter, Ābarrā is told by Tasammā that Lulit is an unfaithful wife and that someone has seen her enter a hotel in Kotabē to commit adultery. Since their college days Ābarrā knows that Gadlu is a notorious schemer. He also knows about the relationship between Gadlu and Lulit prior to their marriage. But he fails to suspect Gadlu as the source of Tasammā's information.

As the complication increases, tension builds up in the relationship between the characters and within Ābarrā, too. He regrets putting faith in Lulit and submitting his resignation letter. He even picks up the pistol that his brother has given him as a wedding present and contemplates commiting suicide. Although he is soon soothed by his wife's compassion, Hāyla Māryām comes in the morning and ridicules him for making up excuses to delay the day when he has to start devoting himself to his true calling. While the two are arguing Ābāta arrives fuming with rage at Ābarrā's resignation. Ābāta also clashes with Hāyla Māryām, whom he regards as the "devil" that sows discord between brother and brother. When Hāyla Māryām asks him why he is not even greeting him, the other replies: "Leave me alone! It is not without reason that people say 'he who kills a rude person rather than he who raises him up enters heaven.' And don't glower at me like an evil-eyed person!" (p.141). Not everything is smooth between Lulit

and her in-laws either. Her annoyance with Ābāta's and Bāfanā's boast about the greatness of their ancestry has reached such a point that she can no longer tolerate their company. In this way, the atmosphere becomes increasingly tense as the plot develops to its climax.

To prepare him for the major developments, the reader is provided in advance with some anticipatory signals. Early on before his marriage to Lulit, Ābarrā's tells him her dream as follows:

> "Takleyyē [i.e., St Takla Hāymānot] shows me clearly. It seems to me that you and I were standing on the opposite banks of a river. As I was scared of the bridge you walked towards me to hold my hand and help me cross the river. When you reached near me, you cut a piece of reed and gave it to me. As I held the reed abd looked at it, it transformed into a snake. I woke up in shock."
>
> "So what is its meaning, mammy?"
>
> "Dreams depend upon the interpreter, my son. It is a good dream. A river is of course life. Your inability to help me cross it ... ahh! ... Takleyyē knows. The transformation of the reed into a snake ... may Takleyyē protect you against evil, my son. You should be careful. Last week I saw in my dream that the enjarā that Ābāta and Elfenash were eating was mouldy. What I feared has now come true and they are going to be divorced."
>
> (p.56)

The primary function of the dream is to foreshadow the fate of Ābarrā's mother and the dangers that Ābarrā will face because of Lulit. The lady validates her predictions by reporting how her previous dream is being proved true by what is happening to Ābāta's marriage. The divorce is averted only at the last moment, when Ābarrā decides to marry Lulit.

The gravity of the antagonism between Ābāta and Hāyla Māryām and the imminence of a tragic resolution of this conflict are also hinted at in what the latter says to Ābarrā:

> There is one common element between me and Ābāta. Although we differ in what we want, we are both striving to leave behind one heritage in this world. Our haste shows that we haven't enough time .... If we consider his interest in depth, we realize that it is not just descendants that he wants to leave behind. He also wants his beliefs, outlook, and life-motto to stay intact after he is gone. He cannot do this himself because he is childless. You are his only hope. For him this is a matter of life and death.
>
> (pp.128-129)

Hāyla Māryām repeatedly reveals in his speech an anxiety that his mission in life might be abruptly cut short. An element of urgency can be detected in his reply to Ābarrā's invitation to visit their home: "I dislike going to a married couple's home. I feel as if I would be contaminated by their disease. But the truth is that I have no time at all. I have suddenly begun a race against time. These days I feel that time is moving too fast for me." And when Ābarrā tells him to slow down, he replies, "I can't slow down. There is some power urging me on" (p.127).

After Ābarrā's marriage to Lulit, his inner conflict becomes increasingly subordinated to the external conflicts among the people around him. Despite the causally motivated nature of these conflicts, their resolution comes about through a situation that hinges on coincidence. One morning, while taking Lulit to her office, he casually tells her that his birthday is the following day. Then he drives to his office, collects his last pay and gives her a call. But he is told that she is not in her office. He drives straight to her office and finds out from the old guard that Lulit has left with a man driving a 1959 black Opel. Every morning Ābarrā has been wondering why his wife has to be so glamorously dressed when she goes to work. Now Tasammā's gossip suddenly echoes in his ears. Burning with jealousy, he speeds to the said hotel in Kotabē. There he finds a black

car that fits the guard's description parked in the hotel compound. He checks the room occupied by the owner of the car and, in a subsequent shoot-out, he kills a woman he has never met before. He gives himself up to the police and ends up in prison. Just as he fails to realize the true source of Tasammā's information, he again fails to suspect that the black car that the guard told him about could have been his own friend Hāyla Māryām's. It is while in prison that he learns Lulit had gone out with Hāyla Māryām to buy him a present of paint brushes for his birthday. The incident, although ironic, artificially resolves the conflict within Ābarrā by removing the external pressures on him. Just as she has predicted in her dream, his mother dies in his absence. His brother murders Hāyla Māryām and in turn commits suicide. Gadlu is arrested on charges of attempting to murder his old wife and illegally inherit her wealth. Ābarrā assumes that Gadlu did this because he was encouraged by Lulit. So, he tells her that she is henceforth free to lead her own life and advises her not to wait for him. When he is thus cut off from the people who have been exerting pressure on him and the life-style he has been used to is no longer available to him now, he is forced to give his whole attention to "the call of life". Although the conditions in the prison and the proceedings of the trial are described extensively, they are essentially digressive. The conditions and incidents in this place are not presented with a view to showing the impact of his new environment on the development of his new determination and sense of purpose — a change which is rather too smooth and swift for a man of his background.

In the interview cited earlier, Ba'ālu claimed that the fact that the story begins with silence and comes to an end with Ābarrā in prison reflects "the worthlessness of the social system." But this seems to contradict the implications of the portrayal. In the first place the protagonist is not in the same situation both at the beginning and end of the story. When we first encounter Ābarrā in the opening scene, his artistic genius is supressed and craves to be liberated. The narrator reports an analogy (though crude in terms of connotative function) meant to illuminate this

craving to come into the light. First the silence is painted positively, for the narrator says: "The house is swallowed in the depth of silence. The melody that quietly flows out of that quietude is endless. It can thrill the soul with joy, tickle the mind and make thoughts dance rhythmically" (p.5). The description is given from Ābarrā's point of view, for it is his poetic mind that perceives the atmosphere in the room in this light. And spell-bound by this tranquility, he paces up and down in the room until the buzz of "a big black fly" suddenly destroys "the rhythm in the music of the silence." So he frets about to kill the fly, which keeps buzzing and banging against the window pane and the ceiling before settling on the light bulbs. Unable to destroy it without damaging his property, Ābarrā ponders for a moment and then opens a window. As if that is what it has been waiting for, the fly makes its exit through the open window. A fly does not evoke a positive association as a bee or a butterfly does. But its analogic relation with Ābarrā's stifled genius is obvious in what he says after its exit: "But I have no outlet" (p.7). At this stage of the story, the conflict is firmly locked within Ābarrā's mind and the scene itself has no symbolic or actual link with the external social forces.

The prison with which the story ends has a positive role as far as Ābarrā's development is concerned. Jealousy (a universal human foible, and not an evil created by the existing social system) drives him to kill a stranger. The system recognizes the impelling conditions that led him to commit the crime and hence banishes him to the narrow confines of a prison for just three years. This becomes the immediate pretext for the removal of the external pressures on him. When he declares to Lulit that she is henceforth free, he is also severing his last link with his past life and in essence declaring his freedom from its fetters. Thus, when he collects the paint brushes she has brought him and parts from her, the narrator reports: "It was not the old Ābarrā who returned to his prison cell, but one who saw beyond the horizon of the prison. This is so because it was with a new life and a new mission that he returned" (p.185).

And in the closing paragraph of the novel we are told: "So that the white blank canvas stretched out on the board in front of him may conceive life and draw breath, he devoted to it his whole energy, interest, and mind and began to dab at it" (p.186). Liberation thus comes to Ābarrā's creative genius while he is in prison and because of it. Metaphorically speaking, therefore, the prison ceases to function as a real prison.

II

In Ādafres, the main events are presented chronologically. The bulk of the expositional information about the characters is formally reported by the narrator, often in solid blocks. Thus, after the reader has been motivated for it through the dialogue between Siwanē and Āsaggāsh, the expositional information about the guests from Addis Ababa is provided separately, in a whole chapter, prior to these characters' actual appearance on the scene. The information about Siwanē's personality and educational background is also reported separately in one chapter, but after her appearance on the scene. The background information about Āsaggāsh, too, is reported after her appearance on the scene, but in two solid blocks (in the fifth and fifteenth chapters). The bulk of the information about Gorfu and Pētros is also directly reported by the narrator, but at the points of their appearance on the scene. Only a very small proportion of the expositional information is given indirectly. The reader is offered these small bits through dialogues, as in the case of the information about Kebrat's education and Waldu's past life.

In Ka-ādmās Bāshāggar, the main events unfold chronologically, but the antecedents preceding the onset of the central action are delayed and presented later. Unlike in Ādafres, the bulk of the expositional information about the characters is presented indirectly, either through dialogues or in the private reminiscences of the characters.

The flashback on Ābarrā's relationship with Susan Ross, for instance, is given as his reminiscence. So are his first

sexual experience with Trengo and his first attempt to draw pictures. Through the reminiscences of Hāyla Māryām, the reader is provided with part of the expositional information on the private lives of Ābāta and Gadlu, as well as the school life that he and Ābarrā have shared. Ābarrā's reminiscences are flashbacks proper, for they are scenic (with dialogues, descriptions and actions) whereas Hāyla Māryām's are summaries. But in both cases, the reminiscences come as mental excursions into the past and are often overtly identified as such by the narrator. Thus, before the onset of the flashback on Trengo, the narrator says: "While he was lazily trying to scrub his body, he touched on the right hand side of his chest the big scar that had lived with him for twenty five years. He remembered Trengo. Is she alive? Has she died? He did not know. All he knew was just one thing" (p.13). At the end of the reminiscence the narrator says: "Trengo's memory and the warmth of the water had apparently stimulated his body, for his sexual appetite was aroused" (p.14). In some instances, the narrator does not overtly indicate the source of the information, as when Hāyla Māryām reminisces about Ābāta's private life. In such a case, the reader can only infer from the context of the act. In the initial part of the novel, when Ābāta asks Hāyla Māryām for how long he has known Ābarrā, the latter "ponders" for a while and then replies "roughly for twenty years." Then, after the transitional statement, "his estimation was correct," there comes a summarized report about their past friendship. The transitional statement is deceptive, for it gives the impression that the summary is given from the narrator's point of view. But at the end of this report it becomes clear that the source of the information is Hāyla Māryām: "He even remembered the night they passed together with a black American woman in the city of Sacramento. How the time flies! It has been over five years since they graduated in Political Science and returned from America" (p.20). Here it cannot be the narrator who feels that the time is flying fast. It is immediately after this report that the following information about Ābāta comes:

> It had been a long time since Hāyla Māryām knew Āto Ābāta. While he was in Āsfāw Wasan school, General Wingate school, and the University College, he, together with Ābarrā, had visited his home and been entertained there many times. Hāyla Māryām used to be astonished when he found him with a new wife every time he visited his home. According to what he had heard, Ābāta sold all the land he had inherited from his father in order to cover his expenses for dowries and wedding feasts. And he never married other than a virgin girl. Perhaps this was his means of guaging the extent of his old age.
>
> (pp.20-21)

Although there is no overt indication of the source of the above information, it is obvioius from the context that it is a continuation of Hāyla Māryām's reminiscence of the past life he shared with Ābarrā. He is asked about the extent of his aquaintance with Ābarrā and this triggers in his mind memories of not only his experiences with Ābarrā but also his aquaintance with his friend's brother.

Apart from the private reminiscences, dialogues are also used for conveying expositional information. Thus, immediately after the above-quoted report, Ābāta says to Hayla Māryām:

> "When is friendship for then? Why don't you advise him at least to be self-sufficient? He earns eight hundred berr a month, but he lives in a rented house. I managed to own a house and support myself with a salary of just two hundred berr. On top of this it is I who support our mother; Ābarrā doesn't care about her. I wouldn't have minded this if he had at least become self-sufficient and reputable. He is rash, very rash. He won't stick to one job, he won't take advice. Everyone admires his ability. What he only lacks is patience. When I adivised him

to be patient, do you know what he said to me?"

"What did he say?"

"He said, 'I don't understand people advising me to be patient. Stagnant water becomes foul; it stinks,' and left me angrily. If he had had patience, his colleagues wouldn't have surpassed him in their ranks. Many have acquired wealth, got married and now have children. They help their relatives, visit them on holidays and bloom with the blessings of their parents and kinsmen. When I see them, I become envious. Why don't you advise him?"

(pp.21-22)

In the above dialogue, the expositional information about Ābarrā's personality and relationship with his people is conveyed casually, without appearing to be addressed to the reader (although Hāyla Māryām is likely to be aware of the details even earlier). Ābāta is motivated to convey the information because it serves him as supporting evidence for his argument. Some time later, Hāyla Māryām, too, is motivated more or less similarly to speak of the bitter hardship he suffered in his childhood. While urging Ābarrā to leave his job, he criticizes his lack of courage by saying: "I understand your fear. You don't know what poverty and hardship are .... You haven't tasted them" (p.48). When Ābarrā challenges him by asking if he has tasted them, the other replies by recounting how his parents died of hunger and how a neighbour saved his life by sending him to a boarding school. But, unlike in Ābāta's case, this information is apparently new to Ābarrā, who would otherwise not be surprised by it. To counter the reader's scepticism of Ābarrā's unawareness of such an experience of his friend, and, consequently, to justify the present communication of the background information, Ābarrā is made to wonder about his friend's secretiveness: "His heart was touched by what had happened to Hāyla Māryām. Still, he also thought: when we passed all these years together, why didn't he tell me about his childhood life until now?" (p.49)

The greater part of the expositional information about Lulit is also presented through dialogues, after her appearance on the scene. Following their meeting at Gannat Hotel, Ābarrā's curiosity about her secretiveness and his attraction to her lead him to ask his secretary about her old schoolmate. Later, after their marriage, Lulit herself recounts to him her childhood experiences as a gesture of her trust in him. To the reader, however, the information serves mainly as an explanation of her eccentric attitude towards men.

Direct characterizations by the narrator are few as the delineation of the characters is done via their manners, actions, and speeches. Nor does the narrator use the characters to make sermonizing generalizations. He is generally reserved from making isolated, overt, and evaluative comments about the characters and the events. He presents the thoughts and impressions of the characters mainly in brief summaries. The exceptions in this case are the reminiscences, which are sometimes extensive. Direct quotations of consciousness are sparse and often no more than two to three lines of thought within quotation marks and accompanied by the narrator's tags. Although the characters have individuality, most of them seem to be built around one dominant feature. Ābarrā is characterized by irresoluteness, Hāyla Māryām by idealism, Ābāta by single-mindedness, and Lulit by her eccentric vindictiveness. Gadlu is a schemer and Tasammā is a gossip-monger. Baqala is a glamorous womanizer who has no talk except about his new suit and girls. Bālchā is a spendthrift and is always wandering from one office to another to borrow money to pay his debts. Their distinguishing traits seem to be selected with an eye on the roles they play in the development of the plot. Although they are plausible and lively characters, they seem to be wanting in depth and complexity.

III

One distinctive quality which marks this novel is the description of the physical appearances of nearly all the

characters, both major and minor. The descriptions are given sometimes from the narrator's point of view and sometimes from a character's point of view. The details are provided sometimes in installments and occasionally in a single block. Generally, the descriptions are given soon after the character's appearance on the scene.

But in the case of Ābarrā, the details of his physical features are presented after the depiction of his general temperament. Following the flashback on Susan Ross, he enters the bathroom, wipes away the mist blurring the mirror and looks at his reflection. The description then follows, with the details interspersed in the report of his actions. What the narrator tells us about Ābarrā's looks is essentially what the latter actually sees in the mirror: a balding head, a small face, light-brown complexion, thick but well-shaped eyebrows, big round eyes, a straight nose with slightly wider nostrils. Then comes Ābarrā's action. He picks up a pair of scissors and cuts the hairs jutting out of his nostrils "like radio antenna." When he finishes this, he opens his mouth wide and folds his tongue backwards to see how much his teeth have been stained by cigarette smoke. The inner part looks like "a rusting tin". Then he spreads out his "thin" lips and looks at the outer part of the teeth, "which, although not as white as milk, are still clean" (p.12). He rubs his cheeks up and down to check if his beard has grown. His cheeks are "as soft as a baby's skin." His armpit hair has grown up very much and become "tangled like a hermit's hair" (p.12). He recalls how Susan Ross used to pamper him by shaving his armpit hair and trimming his toe nails for him. Longing for her company, he goes to the bathtub to immerse himself in the hot water. With this the perspective shifts to the narrator, who then proceeds to tell us that Ābarrā is of a medium height, with a broad chest and a slim waist. In this way, the details of the physical features of Ābarrā are presented to the reader both from the character's and the narrator's points of view. After finishing his bath, when Ābarrā tells his friend that they should go to Gannat Hotel and enjoy the party, the narrator describes how glamorously dressed he is.

The description of physical appearance by piecemeal and from the points of view of both narrator and character is a technique applied in the case of Hāyla Māryām, too. While Ābarrā is taking his bath, Hāyla Māryām casually appears on the scene and begins telling him about his sexual experience with an Italian's housemaid. From within the bathroom, Ābarrā mocks at him and this drives Hāyla Māryām away to the living room. Then comes the narrator's description of Hāyla Māryām's gait: "Like a man carrying a heavy burden, his feet dragged on the ground. For this reason, he had no shoes with even heels. As all his shoes were worn out from behind, they looked like a drunken man whose teeth are knocked out on one side" (p.16). As Hāyla Māryām enters the living room, he switches on all the lights. When flood-lit like this, the curtains, the sofa, and the carpet "come to life." The lights also vivify his physical features: dark, overgrown hair, ant-like beard on dark-brown cheeks and a square chin, protruding cheek bones, flat nose with wide nostrils, thick lips, tired-looking eyes. Says the narrator: "He often said, 'a lighted cigarette, an open book, a glass of whisky are my bosom friends. When I am with them I feel relaxed.' He had all the three and he was relaxed" (p.17). When the narrator's description ends, there follows Hāyla Māryām's monologue, soon interrupted by the arrival of Ābāta. After a description of the new comer from Hāylā Māryām's point of view, there comes a dialogue between the two. When Ābāta departs, there comes a description of Hāyla Māryām's clothes from Ābarrā's point of view, for he says to him: "... Let us go, but before we do, you must change your clothes __ at least today!" (p.28) Ābarrā feels his friend's shabby garments would be too out of place when they join the revellers at the Easter party at Gannat Hotel. But Hāyla Māryām replies defiantly, "If you insist on our going, let us leave then.... As for my clothes, those who don't appreciate them can turn away" (p.28)

In some instances the descriptions are accompanied by explicit indications that the point of view is the charcter's, as when Lulit is first presented to us in the dance hall of

Gannat Hotel. Earlier, when Gadlu retaliates against Hāyla Māryām's scorn, the narrator says: "Although his mouth spoke, his eyes were somewhere else. He smiled broadly to give the impression that they were having a friendly chat. Ābarrā followed Gadlu's line of vision. He understood why he came to their table" (p.36). After Gadlu leaves, the description of Lulit follows:

> "Why were you so hard on him?" Ābarrā said half-heartedly. His big eyes were fixed somewhere else. He could not take them off and turn them towards Hāyla Māryām. With his eyes, he was caressing her bare bosom, long neck, round shoulders, and lips that looked like a blooming rose.
>
> She sat with her side turned to the table and her legs overlapping one over the other. With her arm resting on the table, her thumb under her chin, she was lightly stroking her cheek in a meditative manner __ like someone contemplating something.
>
> While her glittering black dress drew the light of the candle to itself, her ear rings, which scintilated like diamonds, threw it back. The toe which protruded out of her golden sandal like the tongue of a rude boy was mocking at people. When she stared at him, Ābarrā bowed his head. When she turned away, he stared at her. Sometimes their glances collided and both instantly turned away. They collided, turned away again. A small flash, a big flash.
>
> While all this was happening, Hāyla Māryām didn't notice anything.
>
> (pp.37-38)

After some conversation with Hāyla Māryām, Ābarrā suddenly dashes to the dance floor, with Lulit leading the way. As they dance, more details of what Ābarrā can see from close range are given interspersed in the description of the general scene: a slim waist, a narrow face, a

melodious voice, big sparkling eyes, a straight nose slightly curved up at the lower tip, and flashing teeth. Lulit appears to Ābarrā like a goddess, so close and yet distant, so radiant and yet cold.

Although the scenes in the dance hall and those in which Ābarrā makes love to Susan Ross and Lulit are vividly rendered, they are not geared towards reinforcing any particular dominant impression. It is the same with the description of casual scenes, too. In the following description, for instance, Ābarrā and Hāyla Māryām drive from Gannat Hotel to a red-light district and, in the process, the reader is given details of their movements and what they casually observe on their way, just for the sake of recreating the scenes.

> They drove up the new Qērā Road, leaving Mexico Square to their left, then turned their car to the north and headed towards Churchill Road. They found the slapping cold wind and the wide empty road agreeable and they were beginning to feel refreshed.
>
> The moon was hiding behind the mist. The black sky, now undecorated by the stars, was swallowed in deep silence and stretched out wide.
>
> The music from Wābi Shāballē Hotel was flowing into the streets. The cars parked there were no less than those at Gannat Hotel.
>
> When Ābarrā's car entered Churchill Road, it roared once and then shot forward like an arrow.
>
> Here and there one could see drunken men staggering on the road. When they were about to leave Churchill Road and turn to Cunningham Road, they felt sorry for the man who was leaning against a lamp post and vomiting. At the same time, turning his face to a building, his friend was whistling and urinating.
>
> The heart of Addis Ababa, Piazza, was invaded by a pack of dogs. As the two headed towards Emperor Menilek Square, they saw some worshippers

wrapped in white, warm , cotton cloaks returning from Mass.

(p.49)

The above kind of casual scenes are also described when Ābarrā and Hāyla Māryām drive to Gannat Hotel, and when Ābarrā visits his mother at Easter.

In this novel, we also find descriptions of interiors, although the emphasis here is on highlighting the contrasts in the personalities of the characters and their life-styles. The contrast between the tastes of Ābarrā and Hāyla Māryām, for instance, is reflected not only in their garments but also in the furnishings of their homes. Unlike Ābarrrā's home, Hāyla Māryām's is sparsely furnished with simple and cheap materials. When Ābarrā visits his home, he observes the following:

> Except for the bathroom, the rest of the other rooms were crowded with books. Four chairs made of cane and a medium-sized table had filled up the place that served as the living and dining room. On the floor, there was a small mottled mat [of the cheap woollen type] from Dabra Berhān. It had four holes where it was burnt by unextinguished cigarette stubs. Apart from the books on the brick-and-plank shelves and the expensive wall and bed-side lights, one saw no other decorative item in the house.
>
> ---
>
> Coffee was boiling in a little kettle sitting on a small electric stove. If the aroma of the coffee had not filled the room, it would have smelt as fusty as a desolate house or an unused library.
>
> (pp.80-81)

Notes and References

1. Sebhāt Gabra Egzyābhēr, who knew Ba'ālu since the

time the two were students at University College, told me that there were some aspects of Ba'ālu in the protagonist. He did not specify what these are. He also told me that Ba'ālu had confirmed to him that Hāyla Māryām and Gadlu were based on two of their schoolmates in college. Sebhāt gave me this information when I interviewed him (in December 1984) about his being used as the model on whom the two writer-characters in Ba'ālu's post-Revolution novels are based.

2. "Dersat Mannashāw Heywat Naw", Yazārēyetu Ityopyā, 22 Genbot 1973 E.C.

Chapter Ten

YA-RAGGAFU ĀBABOCH

I

Ābbē Gubañña was one of the most prolific Amharic writers. He has produced over twenty works, all but two in Amharic, over half of them novels, and the rest plays, poetry, and essays. His novels are not of the same quality as that of his two books of poetry. One possible reason for the insipidity of his prose works could be his belief about form: "Since the important matter is what is told and not how it is told, the style of writing should always be rgarded as secondary to the theme."[1] As far as his novels go Ābbē's strength lies mainly in his courageous criticism of social injustice and in his advocation of reforms which he felt would help to alleviate the economic and political burden of the masses. Although he made his living for some twelve years by means of his writing[2] and although he often over-reacted to adverse criticisms of the quality of his narrative methods, his works showed less technical improvements than one would have expected. Ya-raggafu Ābaboch, for instance, is his eighteenth work and was written after the publication of the more imaginative works of Berhānu, Dāññāchaw, and Ba'ālu discussed earlier. But one is disappointed by the absence of any signs in it which might show that Ābbē had attempted to draw lessons either from the weaknesses of his own works or the merits of his contemporaries' popular works. Although the novel is in a single volume, its content is presented in three "books". Book One has two chapters, Book Two has four chapters, and eventhough Book Three begins like the others with a "Chapter One", it has no subsequent chapter. While the first chapter of each Book is given its own heading, the subsequent chapters have none. Possibly, the headings may have been intended for each Book rather than for each chapter. There is no evident structural or thematic basis which serves as the criterion for dividing the

story material in the given chapters. Book Two, for instance, is divided into four chapters in each of which the main event is the fact that the characters wander from one bar to another bar to celebrate New Year's Eve by drinking.

The arbitrary division into chapters, however, is only one manifestation of the deficiency in the structural organization of the story. The narration begins with a general report of the protagonist's current state of mind. The day is Saturday, New Year's Eve. We are told that Ālafa has been unhappy all day, for the holiday has worsened his sorrow for his late mother and increased his hatred for his father. In the past he used to drink a lot so as to forget his grief, but not today. Around seven o'clock in the evening, he drives to the top of Entoto. No reason is given as to why he does this. As he looks down at the city lying below, the narrator reports the scene of vehicles moving with their headlights on, blinking neon lights, and scattered street-lights "which together make the city look like a field of colourful flowers" (p.7). Although the intensity of Ālafa's grief has been repeatedly stressed (in fact, it is reported to have "exceeded the normal limit"), this is not shown in his reactions. His perception of the scene is not permeated by the said dominant mood. Actually he becomes very "delighted" by the sight of the city as if he were seeing it for the first time. The thoughts that occur to him are confused and do not reflect genuine sorrow:

> Addis Ababa! Yes! one longs for you when one is away from you. Beginning from seven o'clock in the evening, when one sees you from the top of Entoto, you really look like colourful flowers. But how many astounding activities take place in you? How many are dead drunk now? And today is the great holiday, New Year's Eve! How many chickens, sheep, and bullocks would be slaughtered for superstitious sacrifices and festivities of the holiday tomorrow? And if I may return to the

present, how many amazing things happen at this minute? he thought. He tried to laugh at his own thought.

(p.8-9)

When he looked towards the east, the full moon had risen a little above the horizon. Moon, you, too, might some day become a city! But, unless they are born on you, the poor are unlikey to come to you from the earth. And you are going to be fully explored. What commotions might there be on those stars? It is good that they are far away. Everything becomes attractive when it is seen from a distance, he said.

(pp.9-10)

After such a pointless reflection, he turns his attention to the scene lying below. People are lighting fire-crackers and home-made torches. "The smoke above the city touched his painful wound. Āllafa discontinued his philosophizing and focused on his extremely bitter fortune. He remembered his mother" (pp.10-11). His mind turns to the time of his childhood when his mother used to light his torch for him, and her memory brings tears to his eyes. "After weeping for a while, the inevitable thought of his father's cruelty came to his mind" (p.11). From the bits and pieces of the expositional information given earlier, the reader knows that Āllafa's mother was driven out of her home by his father and that she had to raise up Āllafa in poverty because his father denied her her share of their wealth. The father is also reported to have Āllafa dismissed from his job to prevent him from supporting his mother. Although it is now many years since his mother died and although his father's heart later "softened" and he gave his son and daughter their mother's share of the wealth, Āllafa now contemplates killing his father in revenge for his past cruelty. But no explanation is given as to why either Āllafa's grief has not subsided with time or he has had to wait for so many years to consider his revenge now.

Nor is the father's motive for his cruel acts on his wife and children explained.

After the reader has been given the impression that revenge is the main issue to be resolved, the direction in which the action would develop becomes deffuse when Āllafa reflects:

> It is no use. Whomsoever I might kill, it would be of no use to my dead mother. Unless we completely root out violence, cruelty, mischief, and injustice from our society, if we just eliminate one wicked person, there would come up a worse one in his place. One can destroy a wicked thing only by destroying evil itself. It is futile. I don't know for sure whom I should take as my mother's enemy and hold him resposible. It is a complicated crime. (p.12)

A moment later, as he drives back to his home, an elderly man and a girl pass him by in a Mercedes car. Āllafa recognizes his father and feels ashamed when he sees him enter a hotel with the girl. The man is over seventy years old, already married to a woman "as young as his own daughter," and only recently discharged from hospital after receiving treatment for his chronic diabetes and high blood pressure. Āllafa is also reported to have felt "sad" for his adultrous father. But a few paragraphs later, we are again told, "although he didn't know whom to take revenge upon and wished not to, his feeling was already aroused for vengeance" (p.19). The reader thus becomes confused as to the exact nature of the conflict that is being set forth. It doesn't clearly emerge from the report whether the issue is one of a conflict within the protagonist himself or a conflict between him and a particular person. Without setting forth a defined action on which the reader can focus his attention and, within the context of such an action, without motivating the reader's interest in the expositional material, the subsequent narration dwells on Āllafa's family background for over a third of the novel.

The first chapter of Book One is entitled "Reminiscence" and that is exactly what the whole of that section presents. The expositional material is for the most part a repetition of what has been given earlier in bits and pieces. The only significant new information is the fact that Ālīafa's father amassed wealth by collaborating with the fascist invaders and that, after liberation, he used his wealth to gain recognition as an "inside man" of the patriots.

The expositional information is presented in a series of blocks, without any underlying associative principle which can justify the onset of the reminiscence or even the order of its occurrence. The first expositional block deals with how his parents discriminated between him and his elder sister and, when he was only five years old, how his father forced him and his mother out of their home. No explanation is given as to why the parents discriminated between their children; nor does this information have any relevance for the development of the story as the sister has no role in it. The second piece of exposition goes back to an earlier time and deals with the celebration of the first anniversary of the end of Italian occupation, the baptism of Ālīafa, and how he came to be given this name. The aim here seems to be to expose the father's hypocrisy since the name is chosen to suggest that the past suffering under fascist occupation is "all over". The third expositional block goes further back in time and deals with the first day when Ālīafa's parents started their love relationship. The focus being on how the courting culminated in sex, the purpose of the report is not apparent. The fourth block is set at a still earlier time and deals with how Ālīafa's father made his living prior to his marriage. The aim of this section seems to be to paint him as a cowardly and greedy collaborator. In the final chunk of expositon which comes after Ālīafa drives to his home, we are told how the father had him arrested and then thrown out of his job. This part ends with the death of his mother.

In the course of reporting these antecedents, little attempt is made to relate them to the protagonist's current situation and thus justify the need for their communication.

Nor is it clearly indicated as to whether the background information comes as the private reminiscence of the protagonist or as a direct communication by the narrator. On the one hand, the limitations of Ālāfa's knowledge of of the events during his childhood are repeatedly stressed:

> As he drove down, thoughts of the initial conditions of his mother and father, which he was not clearly told about, came to his mind.
>
> But what he accurately heard... from his mother whenver she cried in frustration and spoke of her past was only the fact that she abandoned her business and good reputation and married Āto Tazarrā when he was beginning to acquire wealth during the fascist occupation.
>
> (pp.18-19)

> Although Ālāfa did not directly see everything, after he grew up his mother vaguely told him about some of the past events.
>
> (p.29; emphasis mine)

On the other hand, some of the expositional blocks contain minute details of dialogue, thoughts, and activities which are unlikely to be accessible to Ālāfa's recall. One such case concerns the detailed account of the love scene in which Ālāfa's father first courts his would-be wife. This account starts with the statement: "The recollection which made Wayzaro Ābbabach cry whenever it came to her mind was as follows" (p.36). The report contains intimate details of the love-making which an Ethiopian mother of that time would regard as too embarrassing to recount to her son. If Ālāfa cannot recall this scene and since the mother is now dead, it means that the information could be conveyed only by the narrator. Within the given context, this in turn would mean that the narrator is presenting antecedents which are not necessitated by the protagonist's current position and interest. This kind of digressive reporting also occurs in regard to the activities of Ālāfa's father before the

marriage, for it involves extensive dialogues which even the mother has not heard.

Despite the allocation of over a third of the novel to such reports, the inconsequential nature of the exposition becomes even more evident in its isolation from the incidents in the later part of the novel. After Ālafa returns home, he changes his car, picks up his two friends and drives to a restaurant which serves national food and drink. Here, the focus shifts to the derision of university lecturers who have "studied Amharic" abroad. In his novel Goblānd, the author attacks those language lecturers who dared to criticize the low quality of Amharic prose fiction.[3] By using Goblānd, a monkey that speaks like humans and becomes a language expert after studying abroad, as his main vehicle, he disparages experimentation in the language used in Amharic fictional writings. One of the literary styles which he parodies there is the impressionistic description in the opening passage of the first chapter of Ādafres. In Ya-raggafu Ābaboch, the author repeats his attack by introducing two new characters who are not connected to Ālafa. These are Professor Goljā and his adversary, Berhānu. Goljā is a language lecturer who has studied abroad. Berhānu is his former student whom he deliberately failed in the exmination. When Goljā enters the restaurant, the narrator describes him as a monkey-faced, averagely intelligent man who suffers from an iferiority complex, worships whitemen, and is too cowardly to discipline his adultrous wife. After such a characterization, Berhānu enters the restaurant, sees the Professor and scans the traditional antiques decorating the walls. Then he recalls a book written in English and admired by Goljā. After a while, he begins parodying the style of the description in Ādafres :

> After taking a sip from the ṭajj, Berhānu said, "This scene is for a writer who became sophisticated after studying in the country of the faranjs." He turned to the Professor again and said: "Let me compose the kind of writing my professors like so that they may allow me to return to my classes! ...

Let me try to compose first orally," he said .... "The former nobleman's house has become a restaurant and stands in its former place. Hābashā, young __ old __ bald-headed __ pot-bellied __ protruding teeth __ girl __ married __ prostitute __ professor __ a visiting tourist __ tourist __ again tourist __ men and women __ peace corps __ worker __ government __ private, employee __ secretary __ clerk __ accountant; merchant __ hotel owner __ motel owner __ technician __ pilot __ soldier __ civilian __ unevenly spread beard __ unkempt hair __ combed __ tightened __ he eats in it __ drinks puts into the mouth, chews; masticates; swallows; guzzles down; is pungent. Bottle of __ ṭajj __ whisky __ branca __ trash __ soft drinks __ orange juice __ peeled mandarin __ a spray of Sprite __ dāgussā __ barley __ āraqē __ Pepsi __ Merinda __ bag of honey __ leather bags that smell the smell of goats are placed in a row, standing like empty cartridges after the destruction of thousands of fascists!" Berhānu again turned to the Professor. "Have I composed better now, Professor?" he asked. The Professor didn't answer.

(pp.112-113)

After a similar parody, Berhānu turns to criticizing the foreign-educated lecturers who, according to him, are downgrading the national heritage by attributing all the historical achievements of Ethiopians to foreigners. He then turns to criticizing the tourist authorities for printing publicity posters showing half-naked tribesmen. Following this, the focus shiftsto two new customers, Āllafa's former girl-friend and his rival former classmate. Nothing happens here since Āllafa and his two friends soon drive to a bar owned by Āllafa's mistress. By coincidence, Āllafa's father happens to be enjoying himself with his son's mistress. But the main focus is again on a new character, Husen, who is here used to deliver an extensive argument against the spread of coffee plantations. After the lecture by Husen on the harms of coffee to one's health and to the country's economy,

Ālla fa and his friends go to another bar. In this way the protagonist moves from bar to bar, meets new people, listens to their talk, and entertains himself by drinking. There is no unifying theme, no central conflict, no permeating atmosphere or dominant mood which can hold together the various strands of the story, sustain the reader's interest and make the portrayal meaningful.

The focus constantly shifts from one character to another without any indication of the underlying link between them. Thus after Ālla fa's second encounter with his father, the focus abruptly shifts to Ālla fa's girlfriend and his old rival. The girl who has abandoned Ālla fa in favour of her present friend a long time ago now suddenly regards her companion as a wicked person and decides to be reconciled with Ālla fa. From them, the focus again shifts to another bar where Ālla fa listens to three customers philosophizing about the origin of man and the good and bad sides of human civilization. When their discussion ends, the focus turns to another place, the red-light district where Husen is aimlessly wandering. From there, the focus again abruptly shifts to Berhānu, who has continued with his criticism in another quarter of the city. Through a series of coincidences, the characters meet in a bar, they separate and then meet again in another bar. More and more new characters are introduced into the story, and they come with discussions on various unrelated topics. Later, in a big dance hall, Berhānu provokes Goljā, who strikes him with a stone and escapes in his car. Ālla fa is provoked by his old rival. He shoots him dead and as he tries to flee with his two friends their Landrover collides with Husen's Jeep which is coming from the opposite direction. Only one of Ālla fa's friends survives. While the police are inspecting the accident, Ālla fa's father comes in their direction while driving to a nearby town. When he learns of the death of his son, he suffers from a stroke and dies some hours later. With this, the story comes to an end without attaining any organic unity.

Given the title of the novel, the purpose of the portrayal appears to be to advance the theme that is implicit in Ālla fa's monologue after he kills his former classmate:

> He remembered all his past history. He recalled especially the time when he was a student. "Today's flowers, tomorrow's fruits!" "Today's youth, tomorrow's leaders!" We are flowers that fell without bearing fruit, flowers that are innundated by flood, cut down by hailstorm. All that hope, all that ambition ended up like this! he thought.
>
> (p.256)

If the characters' wandering from bar to bar and entertaining themselves or clashing with each other is meant to show how the youth are wasted, one fails to see the purpose of setting the story on the eve of a major holiday during which such behaviour wouldn't be unusual. Nor is it apparent what all the expositional material about Ālafa's parents or the criticism of language lecturers or the abstract arguments about human civilization have got to do with the implied degeneration of the youth. Besides, the characters presented are not of a homogenous composition in terms of age or economic status. What is common among them is that they happen to be taking advantage of the holiday to pass the night by entertaining themselves in various bars.

The main technical features which might be considered as innovative in this novel are the constriction of current story time to less than twenty four hours and the dislocation of the temporal sequence of the antecedents.

Notes and References

1. In his earlier novel Goblānd: Āchbarbāriw Totā (Addis Ababa, 1964 E.C.), p.100.

2. In the Preface to Āllewalladem (Addis Ababa, 1955 E.C.). I have used the 1966 E.C. edition.

3. In the Preface to Gobländ, Äbbē says: "... like everybody else, while I realize the great need for and the benefits of true intellectuals and hence respect them accordingly, I am also one of those people who consider it as a sacred act to expose pseudo-intellectuals who want to spread ignorance...

If anyone claims that I have lied in the points I have raised in this or in my other works, I am ready to prove that I made no lies.

Above all, the explanations I have presented [i.e., a manual of fiction writing appended to the novel] are supported by the views of foreign writers and observable in reality. So, until those professors of grammar and language who have not yet produced the slightest bit begin to show us their skills, they should stop riding roughshod on writers. This, I am sure, would help them keep their dignity."

CONCLUSION

In the foregoing dicussion, an attempt has been made to show the prevalent tendencies in the presentational modes of the Amharic novel over the first three quarters of this century . In the earlier prose fiction such as that written by Ãfawarq, the plot is based on a central conflict which steadily moves the action forward to a definite end. The portrayal involves few dialogues and proceeds in the form of generalized narration for the most part. The temporal ordering of the events is chronological, with the expositional material presented initially in a lumpsome. The characters are essentially moral abstractions, and are subordinated to the exigencies of plot. By virtue of what they do and/or happens to them, the protagonists, whose conduct is of necessity exemplary, dramatize the moral lesson they are intended to convey. The authorial narrator is by nature intrusive and patronizing and fully shares the value schemes of the protagonists. In parts of the novel, the depiction bears allegorical overtones.

In the novels of Heruy and Germãchaw, the episodic plot has no governing design or progressively unfolding central action which can serve as the basis for advancing a unified theme or forging the string of episodes into an organic whole. The essential link between the series of isolated incidents is the central character. While the protagonist is here, too, presented as a paragon of virtue, his role of exemplification also involves the use of his speech as a vehicle for imparting practical advice. As in the earlier case, there is little distance between the intrusive narrator and the protagonist. But there is a greater degree of particularization of details than in the novel of Ãfawarq.

In the novels of Berhãnu and Dãññãchaw, as well as Ba'ãlu, who are more oriented towards a non-didactic mode of presentation, the plot shows a greater degree of cohesiveness and operates on a higher scale of probability than in the illustrative works of the earlier writers. Here the

expositional material is delayed and presented piecemeal, partly in dramatized form. The characters are more life-like and dynamic, with little idealization of the protagonists. The writer's vision of life is presented subtly, through dramatized situations rather than through isolated narratorial commentaries or sermonizing speeches of the characters. Dialogic scenes occur with greater frequency and adequately reflect the personality of the participants. The authorial narrator exhibits a tendency to be impersonal in his presentations and is restrained from overt identification with the protagonists or patronization of the reader. While the characters are generally delineated situationally, internal perspectivization is still used only peripherally (although the presentation of consciousness even within this limit is subtler than in previous works).

Eventhough subtlety of expression, emphasis on aesthetic effects, and innovativeness of techniques of presentation are tendencies observable in more and more works produced after mid 1950 E.C., the didactic practice of using thinly-fictionalized situations for the direct propagation of one's views still persists. Such is the case in Ābbē's novel where we encounter the kind of episodic plot and mouthpiece characters found in the works of Heruy and Germāchaw. The use of extensive commentary and vehicular dialogue for the transmission of practical advice is also a feature found in Nagāsh's novel. Even in these didactic works, however, there are features which, if measured against the standards of the works before the 1950's E.C., can be regarded as innovative. The retardatory structure and the constriction of current story time in Ābbē's novel, the humorous tone and the natural flavour of the dialogue in Nagāsh's novel, the dramatic ironies and the wealth of vivid details in Hāddis' novel are signs which suggest that the Amharic novel has made a slow but steady progress in improving its presentational methods. And this, it must be noted, was in spite of the fact that most of the writers did not have the full benefits of a well-established tradition of literary criticism.

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GLOSSARY OF AMHARIC TERMS

ābbā:	father; usually used for addressing an elderly priest or monk
āgalgel:	a small grass-basket, generally with colourful designs, used for storing food or cotton
ālaqā:	official; head of a church
āllechā:	stew with termeric
āramanē:	pagan or infidel
āraqē:	home-made liquor
āto:	mister
ba'ātā:	third day of the month on which the Entrance of the Virgin Mary into the Temple is commemorated
baganā:	a harp-like musical instrument with ten strings and a base-box covered with leather
bālāmbarās:	a lower title of a nobleman
barnos:	coarse frock made from sheep's wool
berr:	a note representing the basic money unit of Ethiopia
berz:	unfermented drink made by diluting honey with water
bēta negus:	a circular stately house in the countryside

cheqqenā: a cut of beef with two ribs and the creamy part of the kidneys

dabalo: frock made from untanned sheep skin

dabtarā: scribe

dajāzmāch: an honorary title higher than fitāwrāri

damarā: bonfire made on the eve of the festival of the Holy Cross

dest: sauce pan made of clay

echagē: chief administrator of the Church

elf: ten thousand

elfeñ: main room of a countryside house used as a bedroom and living room; a private chamber

embiltā: a musical wind instrument made of hollowed bamboo

enjarā: pancake-like bread

ensosellā: a plant whose leaves women use as a red dye for decorating and/or softening their palms or soles

faranj: whiteman

felsatā: fast in commemoration of Mary's Assumption

frembā: a cut of beef from the brisket

fitāwrāri: an honorary title higher than qañ̃ñāzmāch

gābi: heavy toga made of cotton

gād: fast on the eves of Christmas and Epiphany

gerā gētā: title of a clergyman (who sits on the left hand side of an ecclesiastic official)

grāzmāch: an honorary title higher than bālāmbarās

gofarē: hair worn long in the afro-style (in the past especially by warriors)

goden tadābit: a cut of beef with four ribs and a part of the hump

gulelāt: crown-like clay on the peak of a roof

hābashā: Abyssinyan

kāfir: non-believer, infidel

kantibā: title of a mayor

krār: a musical instrument with six strings and a base-box covered with leather

ledatā: first day of the month on which the birth of the Virgin Mary is commemorated

lej: child; also used for addressing the son of a nobleman

madab: an earthen bench usually built along the wall

mahāl āgadā: a cut of beef from the flank

masāfent: aristocrats

masob: large grass-basket used for serving food or storing in it

mātab: neck-cord worn by Christians as a symbol of their faith

mesebāhā: prayer beads used by Muslims

nabro: a cut of beef from the forelegs

nat̤alā: very light cotton cloak usually with colourful fringes

qañña̤zmāch: an honorary title higher than grāzmāch

qay wat̤: stew with the powder of red (hot) pepper

qenē: traditional poetry with well-defined rules of versification

qenet̤tābi: cuts of beef from different parts

qerrāri: stale drink left over from a freshly brewed one

qunnā: a grass-bowl usually used for measuring cereals or as a container

rās: an honorary title higher than dajāzmāch

saqalā: a rectangular or square-shaped house in the countryside

shent̤: a cut of beef from the back

sobada'āt: centaur

tābot: a tablet consecrated to a saint or an angel; also used to refer to the saint or angel

t̤ajj: mead-like drink brewed at home; honeywine

t̤allā: home-brewed beer

tāllāq: a cut of beef from the rump

tānnāsh: a cut of beef from the flank

tazkār: a commemorative banquet usually given on the fortieth or eightieth day of the death of someone

waqēt: a unit of measurement for gold weighing twenty eight grams

warch: a cut of beef from the foreleggs

wayzaro: mistress, for adressing a married woman